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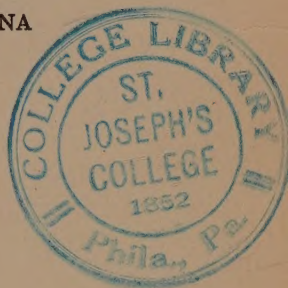


BY

JOHN M. COONEY

NOTRE DAME, INDIANA

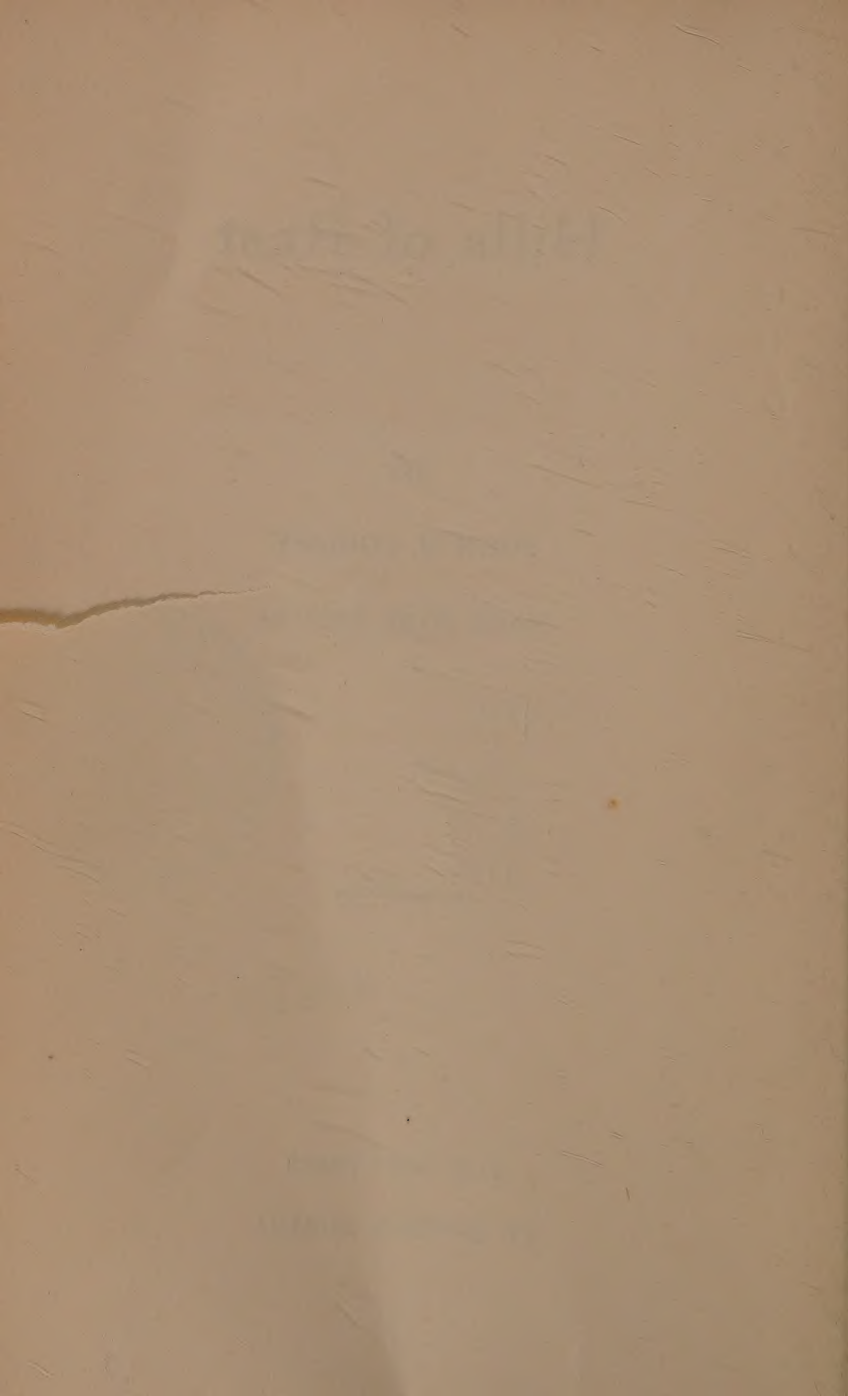
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PREFACE

If the Gentle Reader finds a few hours' relief from his daily burden of care in following the fortunes of those who live only in the pages of this book, the purpose which guided the writing of it will have been attained. If the reader should take in it any pleasure that otherwise would not have been his, knowledge of this pleasure would be a comfort to the writer. And, if someone, when the last line has been read, lays down the little volume with regret that the story is told, loth to part with the characters whose joys and trials in the vicissitudes of life he has followed with interest, then the author will have succeeded beyond what he thought reasonable to expect.

Certain keen, and friendly, critics have seen in this story an attempt to decry national prohibition, or at least an attempt to throw clearer light upon certain evils connected with this much-discussed piece of legislation so as to make these evils stand forth more plainly in the general view. If this has been done, it has been done only incidentally. To tell an interesting tale that might give an hour's enjoyment here and there, was the writer's aim. If, in attempting this, he himself had the pleasure of living again in imagination among once familiar scenes and familiar faces, who will begrudge him?

THE AUTHOR.

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HILLS OF REST

CHAPTER I

THE SPARKS BEGIN TO FLY

““WILLIAM PATRICK ARMSTRONG, *two miles out, on the Riney Run turnpike.*”

“Well, I must be nearly there now.”

Thus Danny Lacey, this bright June morning striding out the brown-surfaced pike from Dunsboro. On his left was a winding, ever-deepening ravine; on his right, the shoulder of a hill, higher above every turn of the road; behind him receded the little county seat where he had spent the night; before him, William Patrick Armstrong, and the immediate matter of applying for the advertised job on the William Patrick Armstrong estate.

“William Patrick Armstrong,” mused Danny, “is not what the Colonel at the hotel called him; he spoke of him as ‘Pat.’ It is not exactly the form the gentleman himself gave his name in the advertisement; the ‘ad’ was signed: ‘Willie Pat.’ I’m sure of that because I copied it exactly in my notebook.”

“‘Willie Pat,’ is right,” continued Danny, as he replaced the notebook in his pocket. “But, then, the full name, of course, is William Patrick. Hereabouts everybody seems to shorten his name in some queer way.

There were 'Red Ben,' 'Turkey Ned,' 'Honey Tom,' 'Jim Cassie,' 'Sim Cap,' and a dozen other such names I heard from the loafers at the hotel last night. It's a strange custom, too, for people that at least strike a stranger as a dignified sort. Without becoming familiar, they all seem willing to be helpful, and they certainly are courteous. Even 'mine host' was quite an impressive personage. I'll never forget, though, the twinkle in his eye nor the stately manner in which he informed me as I left, that 'William Patrick Armstrong lived on the Riney Run turnpike, two miles out.'—But, say, Danny Lacey, doesn't that look like a big, cool spring up there?"

The spring was beyond the fence on Danny's right, at the top of the slope, but at the foot of the cliff that crowned it. Wild flowers were abloom on the grassy ascent; about the spring were some fine trees, one large sycamore stretching its branches over the wooden trough that poured a generous stream into an overflowing rock basin. Danny had a refreshing drink from his cupped hand at the end of the trough. Then he cooled his face and hands, combed back his hair and climbed up into the sycamore to rest a bit.

In his two-mile walk, Danny had not met nor passed a living soul. As he sat on the sycamore limb that extended over the spring, he had a view of the turnpike, of the ravine below and, beyond, of a bold, steep hillside, cedar-clad. A redbird, making a splotch of scarlet on the dark green background, was whistling clearly. The murmur of the stream in the ravine and the plash of the spring water tumbling into the pool, were the only other sounds that fell upon his ears. The quiet of the place settled upon him like sleep, and he felt

confident that, if he could secure the job he was seeking,—and if Mr. Armstrong proved to be a reasonably kind employer,—at least his immediate future would be a happy one. Yielding to the impressions and the humor of the moment, he took out his notebook and slowly set down:

ACROSTIC

Days ago*ne* will come no more,
All my youth has passed forever;
Near me,—none I knew of yore,
Now from all I must dis*sever*;—
YOU were not upon the shore.

Life, like day, begins anew,
And the sea I sail's uncharted;
Can my voyage lead to *YOU*?
Every other hope's departed;—
YOU, UNKNOWN, my haven true.

Yours truly, etc.,
D. L.

Danny read over his lines and pronounced them "punk." "A disgrace to a half-sick 'A. M.' just out of college, and therefore to be destroyed quickly," he soliloquized. But, after tearing out the leaf, he noticed that the address of his prospective employer was on the reverse side; so, for prudence sake, he replaced it and was soon again listening dreamily to the redbird, the murmur of the stream and the splash of the water into the pool beneath him.

But now came another noise. No sylvan sound that he had ever heard or read of resembled it. It grew rapidly louder, rapidly nearer, and it was coming from behind him. First a murmur, then a hum, then a

rumble; now it was becoming almost a roar, punctuated with extraordinary snappings and twangings. Danny turned with quick curiosity to learn what was happening. Two things happened: Danny's quick movement caused him to drop his notebook from his hand, and a water bucket came swinging around the shoulder of the hill, and fell to the spring, where it was quickly filled. Danny climbed down from his seat in the sycamore and, after recovering his notebook, turned to see the now filled bucket making its ascent. The wire trolley on which the bucket rode was again rumbling and humming, now in minuendo. These two things Danny knew. A third, which he did not know, was, that the loose leaf from his notebook had fluttered into the water bucket.

"Well, I hope they'll enjoy that water, whoever they are; for it is good," commented Danny, "and now I'm on my way. The Armstrong place must be only a little farther on. The rest and cool drink have done me good. I can talk up to Mr. Farmer now."

"W. P. Armstrong" was, in fact, the name painted in plain, bold letters on the mail box at the next gate. The gate was an 'automatic.' A good gravel driveway passed through, but quickly lost itself to view behind the slope of a hill. Danny noticed, as he entered, a small stream to the left, flowing toward the pike, and on the rising ground beyond the stream an old log cabin, apparently unoccupied. A few moments later he had his first view of the house. It stood upon the crest of the hill, up which wound the avenue, and was partly concealed by large oaks on the hillside and by others clustered nearer about. The house was of brick, and was of large proportions, green-shuttered, white-

trimmed, comfortable. Danny rang the door bell. Only the screen door was closed, and Danny could see at once a stout colored 'mammy' coming down the hall. Without waiting for him to speak, she said:

"Miss Willie says fo' you to tek a seat an' set down on de po'ch till she gits ready to talk to you."

With that the colored woman withdrew, and Danny took a seat in a wicker chair. Near it was another, in which was a jumble of needlework and a popular magazine. He surmised that these belonged to "Miss Willie," and that "Miss Willie" was one of the ladies of the household; but was at a loss to understand why "Miss Willie"—whoever she was—should invite him to await her coming; for "Miss Willie" could not know his business, nor even his name,—could not have ever seen or heard of him before.

"I wonder if I am going to encounter one of those 'Southern flirts,'" Danny mused; and he was just resolving to be ready for any eventuality when he was brought to his feet by as pleasant a "how-do" as, in Danny's judgment, female voice ever spoke. She stood in the doorway, addressing him through the screen. Danny, with difficulty, maintained his composure.

"I have come to see Mr. Armstrong about work. I saw his advertisement in the *Dunsboro Defender* last night, and I have walked out this morning to apply for the position."

"Do you mean that you are looking for farm work, Mr. Lacey? You do not look like a farm hand, and that is what I want."

"I have never done farm work," admitted Danny; "but I am willing and anxious to try it, and believe I

can make a good hand. But how did you know my name, may I ask?"

A slight, quick flush followed by a faint smile and an unmistakable twinkle in her grey eyes showed that Miss Willie was first confused and then amused. Nevertheless, with a quickly composed countenance and with a slight touch of hauteur, she replied:

"The name does not really make any difference; but you may come to work if you want to. When will you begin?"

"I shall have to return to town to get some working clothes and to have my trunk sent out," replied Danny, somewhat stiffly, "and I can come out myself tonight and be ready to go to work in the morning. Shouldn't I see Mr. Armstrong, and make arrangements with him?"

"That is not necessary at all. The wages offered in the advertisement are what I'll pay."

Danny was puzzled. He was also beginning to feel irritated.

"Am I to work for *you*?" he asked, and his tone betrayed his astonishment.

"Yes, you are to work for me,"—with the faintest return of the smile and the twinkle.

"Are you Mrs. Armstrong, or Miss Armstrong? The colored people, it seems, speak of all ladies as 'Miss'."

"I am Miss Armstrong. When you come back this evening, you will find the cabin by the gate ready for you. You will come to the house at meal times. You can hear Aunt Millie's bell. You may stay for dinner now if you wish. If you prefer to go back to town at once, you may drive the grey mare you'll find in the

barn. If you use the buckboard, you can easily bring your things back with you."

"No, thank you, I'll not stay for dinner. I'll not trouble you for your buckboard. I'll probably be back from Dunsboro by five o'clock, and shall be ready to spend my first night in your cabin."

The girl made no reply. The young man was plainly angry, as though his pride were hurt. He was pale, and seemed to tremble as he walked away. Willie Pat turned from the door with a stamp of her foot.

"The idea of a farmhand talking to me in such a way! I could put him in his place very easily, and I'll do it soon, I'm sure. Better than that, I'll not have him around at all."

She went straight to the telephone and, getting connection with her old friend, Colonel Mitre in town, she requested:

"Colonel, I want you to do me a favor. I have just hired a young man to attend to my tobacco but now I don't want him. He is on his way to town, and will be at the hotel, I am sure, as he stayed there last night. Tell him for me that I cannot have him. His name? Oh, *Danny Lacey* is his name. He is very slender, and pale. You will recognize him, I am sure. Thank you so much, Colonel."

Hanging up the receiver, Willie Pat moved swiftly into the large reception room off the hall. If her eye had sought the mirror over the mantel, it would have shown her a surprising Willie Pat with high color and a flashing grey eye and a threatening frown. But her eye did not seek the mirror. Instead, it looked through the open window, which commanded an excellent view of the whole green hillside, down which wound the

avenue, and there it showed her the solitary figure of the departing Danny. She watched his slow, thoughtful footstep, and felt a wave of pity and regret for her swift resentment. The man was pale, as though just recovering from an illness. He was among utter strangers. To live in an outlying cabin, and to work in a tobacco patch, was evidently not his accustomed manner of life. She had ignored his just request to be informed how she knew his name. Now she had prepared for him another disappointment and humiliation; he was walking toward it at the moment. He had pride, she reflected, and she had thoughtlessly and needlessly hurt it. Then, aloud to herself, and flushing, she asserted:

"I have pride myself; and I should have too much of it to allow myself to become wrought up over a stranger and a farmhand."

With that Willie Pat walked out of the parlor and up the stairway to her room. When, an hour later, Aunt Millie rang the dinner bell, she came down promptly and took her slight repast in silence. As she folded her napkin, she heard Aunt Millie saying:

"Miss Willie, dat dere man what was here dis mornin' ain't lookin' right to me. What he doin' roun' de cabin' down by de gate?"

"Is he there now, Millie?"

"No'm; he done gone to'ds town. But he went inside de cabin an' he looked all roun' it 'fore he left. Dat man look like he sick; is he?"

"I do not know anything about him, Aunt Millie; and we shall probably not see any more of him, so don't trouble your mind about him."

Strangely enough, however, Willie Pat could not

keep her own mind off the extraordinary stranger, whom she had angered and employed and discharged, all within ten minutes after she had first seen him. She was compelled by necessity to have a 'hand,'—indeed she could use two, or three, to advantage. Post-war wages had drawn to the city the two colored men who had worked on the place for years. The tobacco needed cultivation at once, and the general work was suffering. All this Willie Pat was telling herself as she sat sewing in her room after dinner. Over and over she told it, as if to justify herself in doing what she was now surely going to do.

"I engaged him," she said aloud; "I need him; he does not yet know my message discharging him, and I can stop the message still before he receives it. I'll run down and call up the Colonel right away."

"Colonel, I am so sorry to trouble you so much," apologized Willie Pat when she had her old friend on the wire, "but I want to tell you not to deliver that message I gave you this morning.—What? It's already delivered?—It didn't do any good? What do you mean, Colonel?—He's coming back anyhow?—Has a right to? Won't let me discharge him?—You're coming with him? Oh, this is *too* funny, Colonel!—No, no; come by all means. Come in time for supper. Now, I'll expect you; don't fail; good-by."

Willie Pat hung up the receiver and stood motionless.

"*Well*," she said. "Well, if this isn't *too* funny;—too funny not to be serious. Just as I was becoming sorry for discharging him, I am told he won't let me discharge him. I've got hold of a Tartar, I'm afraid. Perhaps work in the tobacco patch will tame him;—if he doesn't quit. Oh, well, I don't know anything about

him, and don't care anything about him except to get him to attend the crop and pay him for it. I need a *good* man, though, while papa is away. Well, I can learn more about him this evening. I can have him to supper with us since the Colonel will be here. And now the first thing to do is to tell Aunt Millie they are coming."

While Aunt Millie was beginning her preparations, under her young mistress' direction, the Colonel and Danny were just leaving town in the Colonel's surrey. Danny's belongings were in the back seat, while he sat in front with the Colonel, who was driving. Danny had already discovered that the Colonel was a kindly soul; no one could be with him an hour without discerning that. Likewise, he could not fail to see that the Colonel was a close and trusted friend of his young employer. It was evident to him also that the Colonel recognized in him something more than an ordinary farmhand, and was disposed to give him any advice or enlightenment he might wish regarding his work and the people he was to work for. Danny, however, persisted in keeping their conversation upon generalities. Only this much of a more personal nature did he feel obliged to say:

"Colonel, now that we are nearing the Armstrongs' I want to tell you that I have enjoyed your company very much, and to thank you for bringing me out in your conveyance. You were certainly very kind this morning in your manner of handing me my discharge, although I was an utter stranger to you. I think I should tell you why I refused to be discharged. It was not especially that I want the place. I'm not going to like it; I know that. I knew it this morning, and it took

me all the time I spent walking back to town to make up my mind to stick. You see, I don't like to be beaten too easily. Then, just when I had made my mind up, you informed me that Miss Armstrong does not want me. Well, she will have to discharge me herself, and tell me to my face the reasons why. Then I'll be willing to quit."

The Colonel was puzzled. Should he or should he not tell the young man that Willie Pat had changed her mind and had tried to recall her message? After they had passed through the gateway, he was again puzzled, for Danny, after setting his effects upon the ground, told him to drive on alone as he would be busy arranging his room and would not go up to the house for supper. The Colonel, after a moment's hesitation, decided to say nothing, and soon was hitching his horse at the hitching rack, while Willie Pat awaited upon the porch to greet him.

CHAPTER II

A NIGHT IN A LONELY CABIN

DANNY'S cabin stood upon a low knoll, looking down on the stream and up at the house high upon the hill beyond. A neglected road leading from the driveway, forded the stream and wound around the cabin to the rear. From a rude crossing of stepping-stones near the ford, a footpath led more directly to the cabin door. The cabin was of logs, with a stone chimney outside. It was of one room only, although there was a loft above, and this loft could be reached through a trap by means of a ladder, which Danny found standing in position near one wall. A fireplace at one end of the room faced a window in the wall opposite. A door and a window opened in the front wall, and, in the rear wall, a door only, from which could be seen some small, neglected outhouses and a weed-choked garden. The walls inside were white-washed, the floor was clean. A small, covered table with a filled lamp upon it, a wooden rocker, a straight-backed chair, a narrow bed in one corner and a plain washstand in another, made up the scant furnishing.

These surroundings did not displease Danny; they promised the quiet and solitude of which the physicians thought he stood in need. The unpacking and arranging of his effects gave him pleasure, and his spirits arose as he realized that an entirely novel future was before him, fraught with interest and almost certain

to restore the health which had been reduced by peculiar hardships in France and by over-study on his return home. Indeed, he knew that he already felt better because he could reflect with clear judgment now upon his recent irritation and loss of temper, and his somewhat Quixotic determination to hold Miss Armstrong to her contract of employment even against her will. He intended now to apologize to her for his irascibility, and to be on his guard against any like displays of temper for the future; for he felt all confidence that, despite his discharge of the forenoon, the whole matter could be rearranged satisfactorily. If he could forget the young woman's treatment of him,—assigning him to live in an outlying cabin, probably once occupied by negroes, and disdaining even to become so personal with him as to tell him how she happened to know his name,—she likewise ought to forget his testiness of temper, almost justified as it was by her own mistreatment of him, and by the fact that he had not yet recovered his usually good control of his nerves. He was almost on the point of going up to the house at once to get the matter straightened out; but prudence told him it would be better to wait till morning; and, in order to be ready for what the morning might bring, he went to bed while it was still dusk and still too warm to close the window or door in his strange, new home.

Meanwhile, at the house on the hill, the Colonel and Willie Pat were in quiet and, at moments, grave conversation. They sat upon the porch, the Colonel puffing slowly the fragrant smoke from tobacco raised the year before in the field lying just beyond the nearest rail fence and visible in the starlight.

"Father has not written now for almost two weeks, and I am growing afraid. He has been gone two months today. Unless I hear tomorrow, I shall wire the doctor."

Willie Pat's voice, soft and trailing away as if she spoke to herself, had in it a note of trouble. The Colonel reassured her:

"Your father will be better. Hot Springs is a good place for such complaints as his. The fact that he is away from the cares of the farm will prove of benefit to him. He will not worry about things at home because there are so many distractions at the springs that he will not have time to worry. You should write him tomorrow that you have a hand now, and that everything will go better on the farm."

"I intend to write him just that assurance, but I have my doubts about the new hand,"—and here Willie Pat smiled in spite of herself. "I don't think he knows a single thing about farmwork; and he does not appear to be strong enough to do much work, either. Besides that, I may lose him almost any day. He seems to be so irritable and touchy that I doubt whether I can have patience with him, even if he manages to have patience with his work and proves willing to remain."

"I think he will remain," declared the Colonel, holding his pipe in his hand while he in turn smiled, though somewhat grimly. "You should have seen and heard him when I gave him your message of discharge this morning."

"I want him to remain," averred Willie Pat, "but I do not want any impudence from him. He may be all you think him,—judging from what you said of him at supper,—and I certainly do not wish to hurt or offend

him in any way; but, for all that, he is here to work for me, and to work as a farmhand, and he must not forget his position. If he keeps that in mind and does his best for me till father comes home, I'll try not to chafe him. But, Colonel, it was *too* funny to see him when I called him by name."

"I don't see yet how you knew his name," ventured the Colonel.

"Why, it was written on the sheet of paper that came back in the bucket from the spring."

"I don't recall it, Willie Pat. The only name I saw on the paper when you held it for me to read was your father's: Wm. P. Armstrong."

"Well, it was there. I am sure it was there. Why, how do you suppose I could have known his name if it was not there? There was no other way for me to know it."

"Get me the paper again, Willie Pat. No doubt you are right, but I should just like to see for myself."

"Well, then, you must see for yourself, old Doubting Thomas," flung back Willie Pat as she disappeared through the door, going for Danny's fated manuscript.

The Colonel chuckled with pleasure, for he was very fond of Willie Pat; but his mirth was over, and he had time to wonder what kept her so long before Willie Pat appeared again on the porch and announced:

"It is just as I said, Colonel; the name is there, written out: 'Danny Lacey.' You did not see it because it is on the other side of the sheet. That is all."

"Oh," conceded the Colonel, "I understand now. But, still, how could you be sure that 'Danny Lacey' was your new man's name and not the name of some other,

just as was your father's name, found on the same sheet?"

"But I was right, wasn't I?"

"You certainly were; but it was a lucky guess. If the guess had been unlucky, the young fellow would not have known what you were talking about."

"It was not a guess entirely, Colonel. You see, the name was with some writing, and I knew it was Danny Lacey."

"You are certainly a grown-up, Willie Pat, for that last piece of reasoning of yours is the reasoning of a *woman*. Would you mind repeating it?"

"No, I'll not repeat it; but it is not so foolish as you seem to think it, Colonel,—smarty. The name was in a poem, one of those acrostics, you know; and no one but Danny Lacey could have written it, I'm sure, because you see,—well, because I'm *sure*; and, if he wrote the poem with his name in it, of course Danny Lacey was his name. And that is the name that he answered to when I called him by it. So you see I'm right."

"Show me the poem," persisted the Colonel.

"Some other time, Colonel, when it is not so dark. You could not read it now without going in," replied Willie Pat, glad of the dark because she did not wish to show the Colonel Danny's ridiculous lines, and because, as she knew perfectly well, she was blushing furiously.

"I hope, at any rate," said the Colonel, rising, "that poetry will not prevent him from making a good hand. If I can learn of another anywhere to be found, I'll send him to you right away. That young fellow down in the cabin will make good in time. He has the stuff

in him, and these young college men know how to use their heads. At first, though, he will be a poor shift, and, unfortunately, right now is when you need help worst. Write to your father tomorrow, Willie Pat, and let me know as soon as you hear from him, won't you? Good night."

"Good night, Colonel; thank you so much for coming out; and be sure to tell Katherine to be here as early as possible. I have no idea now when Aunt Mahala will come."

Willie Pat heard the first slam of the gate just as she lit the lamp in her room, and she peered out the window for a glimpse of the Colonel as he drove through. She heard the gate close, however, without being able to see him. The white stone chimney of the cabin was faintly discernible in the starlight, but the cabin was wrapped in darkness, and Willie Pat said to herself that its new, strange occupant must be already asleep. In this surmise she was correct. Danny was sleeping soundly. His early walk, his shopping in town, and his work in unpacking his property and arranging his room had fatigued him, and the fine air of the high, rolling country, was acting like a balm to his troubled nerves and spirits. Both windows and doors of his room were wide open, and the sweet air of the June night made his slumbers all the more sound and pleasant. He had not heard the rattling of the Colonel's wheels nor the slam-to of the gate. He must have been asleep for six or seven hours before he awoke, or even stirred. He awoke then with the uneasy sensation that someone was in the room. He even thought vaguely of striking a match to see, but the healthful drowsiness that had made him sleep so

soundly now drew him back into peaceful and refreshing slumber.

When he opened his eyes next, the windows showed squares of grey light, and the earliest robin had begun his twittering in the nearest tree. Before the sun appeared, Danny had gone up the hollow and found an excellent morning plunge in a pool, cold and clear and sheltered on three sides by cliffs, over which tumbled the water in a rivulet into the pool, and on the fourth side by a cedar which shut off all view from downstream. Invigorated by his bath, Danny made off for a look about the place. He wished to see first the fields of tobacco and of corn, in which he was to work, and then the stables and barns in which the horses and implements were kept. He was just mastering the mechanism of a "cultivator" when he heard the ringing of a bell. Knowing it must in all likelihood be the breakfast bell, he went at once and without hesitation toward the house. Aunt Millie, bell in hand, came out on a side porch as he drew near, and directed him into the dining room, where he was served breakfast alone. Breakfast over, he inquired from Aunt Millie whether Miss Armstrong had left any orders regarding his work for the day. She had not. Danny therefore decided to plow the corn first. He went to his cabin for his working gloves and big straw hat and, while there, quickly set the room to rights, as he had often done while in "prep" school and in the army. While doing this, he had picked up a half-burnt match from the floor, and now stood holding the match in his hand, pondering. Had he, after all, struck a match in the night when he had heard the sound of someone in his room? No, he remembered well enough he had not. Be-

sides, there stood the match box on the table, out of reach from the bed. He had not smoked, either, the night before; he had not smoked for over a month: neither had he lighted the lamp; he had got into bed before dark. Where, then, could the match have come from? Either he had thrown it there or someone else had thrown it there while he was asleep. Danny flung the match into the fireplace, remarking:

"Oh, well, if no one hereabouts ever does me more harm than to drop a burnt match on my floor, I'll be lucky enough. I certainly will not close up the cabin and shut out that fine air just to keep my floor clean of burnt matches. A robber would scarcely select my 'shack' to 'make a haul,' and, if he does, he is welcome to anything he can find,—except myself,—and he will hardly want me. I had better get to work now. I think I can manage that 'cultivator' all right."

It was a short forenoon for Danny, and a busy one. For the first hour he was absorbed in attending to his team and his machine. As he gained a little mastery, his thoughts became freer. He could see that he was saving the very life of the corn by destroying the robber weeds and breaking the caked soil into the mulch that would keep the moisture below for the thirsty roots. The rows he had cultivated looked already improved. He would do good work, and would do it of his own initiative. He would, in every way possible, stand upon his own feet. He could learn this business soon. His books would give him the theory of it quickly, and actual work and experience would make his theories practical. If he remained a year or two, he would improve the place and increase its profits, or would know the reason why.

By that time his health would be strong again, and, when he left, the farm would be in better condition, and at least a good reputation would linger after him. He might even become a farmer himself, he thought, in the elation of the moment. His pleasant reflections were here interrupted by the sound of a bell floating out over the field. Danny had been in the country long enough to surmise it was the dinner bell calling him in. He unhitched his team at the end of the row and, having fed them at the barn and groomed himself at the cabin, presented himself at the house, again just as Aunt Millie came out to ring her smaller bell, and again was served in the dining room alone. Danny began to wonder whether he was to see Miss Armstrong again and to get their business relations arranged to the satisfaction of either of them; but his enjoyment of the rest he was having and of the excellent dinner and his wonderful new appetite,—to say nothing of the returning steadiness of his nerves and confidence in himself and in the future—made it impossible for him to worry over the situation, which he felt to be still unsettled and unsatisfactory.

The afternoon in the cornfield was long indeed. The unaccustomed work was telling upon the beginner's powers, and it was nearly seven o'clock before the welcome peal of the supper bell was heard. A quick plunge in the pool, however, and a hastily made toilet, set Danny up again; and, as he went toward the house, his fatigue was the least of his thoughts which at present occupied themselves, first, with how very hungry he was, and, secondly, with the advisability of asking Aunt Millie if she could not in the future send

her boy to the cabin with his meals. If he was to take his food alone, he decided he might better do so at his cabin since, manifestly, for him to occupy the dining room at the house alone must be an inconvenience to the household. His good sense told him that the proprieties alone were a sufficient explanation of Miss Armstrong's absence. His surprise, therefore, was great when he entered the dining room and found her there. She was arranging some flowers in a small vase in the center of the table and, as she was leaning over, did not seem to see him at first. For his part, he held back from the table and, as soon as Willie Pat stood erect, said, with embarrassment great but well concealed:

"Miss Armstrong, I have just been thinking of asking Aunt Millie to send my meals to me at the cabin. If I have your permission, I will ask her to do so."

Willie Pat's face was a study. Surprise was there, and a hint of amusement; but there was resentment also, and a puzzled look. Swiftly, however, all these expressions vanished, and only a faint smile remained, as Willie Pat replied:

"'Now from all you must dissever?' Well, I want you to stay for supper with us this evening at least. Katherine Mitre, the Colonel's daughter, is with us, and I want her to see you. Besides, we shall need Aunt Millie to wait upon the table, and she would not have time to send your supper to the cabin now. I hear Katherine coming. That is your chair at the foot. I always pour the tea. So I'll sit between you and Katherine."

CHAPTER III

WHAT THE STORM DID

AN hour later Danny sat in front of his cabin door and disobeyed his doctor's orders by smoking his favorite pipe. Supper with the two girls had passed a pleasant hour, the most pleasant since he had stepped off the train in Dunsboro three days before. He was thinking over that pleasant hour as he puffed at his pipe in delicious leisure between reminiscent smiles. Once at least his smile was at his expense,—he certainly would not ask again to have his meals sent to him here at the cabin. The two young ladies had treated him with every courtesy and kindness. Indeed he was made to feel a welcome guest. He was the more pleased with this because his fair companions had seemed to take this attitude toward him quite naturally, after the kindly manner of the region, as toward one of their own class. If anyone had shown embarrassment, it could have been only himself, for both girls' manner throughout was altogether one of ease. The Colonel's daughter reminded Danny of her father. Like the Colonel, she seemed kindly, quiet, not inclined to words. Danny judged her to be one who could win confidences readily and never betray them. In her brown eyes were candor and courage, softened to womanly sweetness by a great kindness. Her hair was almost black, with only a slight wave in it. Her small, shapely ears and fine features suggested a good background of heredity.

With her raven hair, her fair complexion contrasted strangely. A slight flush had mounted her cheeks several times at remarks of her life-long friend, Willie Pat,—as this, when Danny admitted that he would have many problems in farming to solve: “Well, you see, the sea you sail’s uncharted”; and another such Danny recalled, dropped as he was leaving. Willie Pat had asked him to find time, if possible, to put her car in running order because, she said, “every other hope’s departed.” Danny felt something familiar begin to stir in his memory in connection with these words, and in another moment he would doubtless have recognized them as paraphrases of his own, and taken in some way from the verses he had written when resting near the spring the morning before; but at the very moment his attention was taken away by the first low mutterings of distant thunder.

Looking up, Danny saw the edge of a black cloud rising above the hill on which the house stood and the shimmer of lightning coming up from below. The cloud spread rapidly, the thunder grew louder at every peal; the lightning was a mere shimmer no longer; now great forked tongues searched out every point in the swirling heavens, and blinding flashes connected sky and earth. In the trees arose a murmur which soon grew to a roar as the rain beat down torrents upon their bent and swaying forms. Danny moved his chair into the cabin and closed the front door and window. Through the flooded glass he watched the uproar. The flare of the lightning showed the stream already out of its banks. His thoughts went to the house above. Were the occupants in fear? Should he go to the house

to assure himself and them that all was well? He was virtually a stranger to them, he reflected, and the thought held him back; but a terrific crash, as of blent lightning and thunder about his very ears, decided him;—he would go. In rain-proof coat and hat, and carrying an electric flash light, Danny started toward the house. As he reached the little creek, now swollen to a river, he saw,—or thought he saw,—in a vivid glare of lightning, the form of a man floating rapidly by on the rushing water. Black and white the object was; and, in the blinding lightning, the white portion resembled a human face. So vivid was this impression that Danny followed down the stream, throwing here and there the light from his flash lamp, until he reached the water gate at the pike. There he searched carefully, scrutinizingly, but to no purpose; and he felt a relief as he turned back toward the flooded ford. When he next looked up at the house, however, it was in darkness. The light he had observed had come from the upstairs only, and he knew now that the occupants had retired, and probably were not greatly alarmed at all. Danny therefore lost no time in getting back into the cabin and, after spending half an hour reading, to quiet himself for slumber, said his night prayers and was soon sound asleep.

Sometime in the night,—Danny did not know when,—he awoke suddenly, awoke sitting bolt upright in bed. Wide awake, he listened intently, scarcely breathing. What he heard was another's breathing. Danny was not a coward, but he did not relish this situation. The only thing to do, he knew, was to find out who it could be whose breathing he had most cer-

tainly heard but now heard no longer. As quietly as possible he got out of bed and took up the electric flash light from the table where he had laid it down when he came in out of the storm. Then he backed himself to the wall near the head of his bed, and turned on the light. Danny, let it be repeated, was not a coward, but he felt a great relief when he found there was no other in the room.

"I'm nervous again," he remarked to himself. "Seeing drowned men in the creek and hearing groaning men in my room proves that. I should not have lighted that pipe this evening. My new work and new associations have been strain enough upon my 'bum' nerves without adding a disobedience of doctor's orders. The electric storm also has something to do with nerves, probably. So now for another try at sleep."

Before Danny began even to drowse, he heard again not only heavy breathing, but a groan so unmistakable that he, or any sane man, could not doubt longer either its reality or the direction from whence it came. Danny knew that the sounds of the breathing and the groans came from the loft. Thoroughly aroused now, he felt little fear, if any; so, seizing the flash light again, he mounted the ladder steadily and quietly until his head and shoulders were above the floor. Then, quickly sweeping the dingy loft with his light, he discovered what now did not surprise him much,—a youngish man, unkempt and tired-looking, lying on a pile of corn husks in a corner. Danny's pistol was in his room below, but the wretched figure before him was not that of a burglar nor one for him, even in his weakened condition, to fear.

"What are you doing here?" demanded Danny in even tones, and throwing the light upon the face of the derelict, who was now sitting erect and silent, and looking up with eyes filled with misery and apprehension. "I say, what are you doing here?"

The man hesitated, gulped. "I—came in out of the storm. See; I am all wet; I—"

"Oh, it was you I saw in the creek," interrupted Danny. "I thought you were drowned. Where did you get out of the water? I tried to help you but could not find you."

The stranger threw his arms around his knees, and dropped his head upon both. Then he distinctly shuddered. In a moment he looked up and, in a voice quiet but husky with anxiety and awe, demanded:

"Is he dead?"

His grey eyes looked glassy in the light. His unshaven face showed an almost unearthly pallor. But already he was regaining his composure. He looked Danny in the eye, and in the tired grey eyes Danny saw no fear. Misery he read, and weariness, and perhaps grief, but not fear.

"Is he dead?" the man demanded again.

"I do not know whether the man I saw is dead or not," replied Danny, now looking at the stranger sharply and with a chill of suspicion in his voice when he said:

"I do not think now that he could have been dead, else I should have found the body at the water gate. He must have been still living and still able to crawl out of the water somewhere, and get away. Otherwise I should have found him. For that matter, it may not

have been a man at all. I saw only by the flash of the lightning."

"It was a man you saw, and he was dead. He is in the creek somewhere now," said the intruder, and his tone was one of hopelessness and finality.

"How do you know?" demanded Danny.

The weary and miserable eyes again looked without fear into Danny's, and the weary voice said:

"I pushed him into the water, nearly half a mile from here, up the stream. He was dead before he came this far, else he would have managed to get out."

"Did you try to drown him?"

"No; I did not."

"What were you doing out in such a storm? What were you doing on this place at all?"

"I may have the right to ask you what you are doing on this place. I was born on this place. If I had a home, this would be my home."

Again the head sank upon the folded arms and knees, and again a shudder passed through the wretched frame. For several moments, not a word was spoken. The man sat motionless upon the corn husks in a flood of light. His face was hidden, but Danny would never forget the grey eyes, glassy when the light was on them. Willie Pat's eyes were grey. Somehow, Danny feared to ask the question, but he knew he must.

"What is your name?" he demanded.

The man looked up again, but made no response.

"Is your name Armstrong?" inquired Danny.

The stranger gazed at him steadily for several moments, and then answered quietly:

"Yes; I am Philip Armstrong."

"Are you a brother of Miss Willie Pat?"

At the mention of the name, the countenance of the stranger brightened, and an expression of great gentleness and sweetness played for an instant about the unshaven lips.

"Yes," he replied, "I am her brother. I am not worthy of such a sister, but I am her brother. And now, who are you?"

"I am a new farm hand, hired only yesterday,—the only farm hand on the place."

"*You* are not a farm hand. Are you jesting with me because you think I am in a position to be made merry with?"

Danny cut off the light of his torch before he replied. He had noticed the gable window that looked out toward the pike. Philip Armstrong was silent, too, a moment. Then he questioned:

"Why have you put out the light?"

"I only then noticed the window. I have never been up here before."

"Well, what of the window?"

"We can talk as well in the dark, can we not?"

"I suppose so; but what has the window to do with our talking?"

"Well, say now," replied Danny, "is it necessary for anyone to notice a light in that window tonight?"

A moment's silence followed. Then Armstrong inquired:

"Do you know what I think? I think you are making up your mind to befriend me. Don't do it."

"I am not making up my mind to befriend you," replied Danny, "but I have already made up my mind to see that you get justice,—from me at least. I don't

know what you have done, Philip Armstrong, and I don't ask; but I am sure you did not try to drown that man."

"No, I did not try to drown him, nor intend to harm him; but I am sure he is drowned, nevertheless. I must go and try to get him out of the creek."

"No," ordered Danny; "don't do it yet. Wait. There is time still. Come down with me. I'll not flash the light; you know the way as well as I do."

"Unfortunately for me, I know it better than you. I'll follow you."

Danny rummaged among his effects until he found an alcohol stove. He lighted this, sheltering the match with his hands to prevent the diffusion of its light, and put upon the stove a small pot of coffee. Then he found a box of crackers, a small pot of cheese and other knick-knacks for a quick lunch, the convenience of which he had learned both at college and in the army. He forced his miserable guest to eat and drink, and was soon rewarded by finding him invigorated and encouraged. Philip Armstrong said to him:

"I do not wish you to get yourself into trouble by defending me; and I do not wish you to do another thing for me until you know what kind of man you are assisting. I'll tell you, if you listen, the wretched story of my misdeeds, which have made me what you see me tonight. Then I'll go and find poor Tom's body, and walk into town and surrender myself to the sheriff."

"No; I'll not listen to you now. I am anxious to hear the story, but not now. Besides, I'll not let you go to look for Tom's body,—whoever Tom is. Instead, I wish you to listen to me and to do as I say. You hold

that you did not try to drown him, that you did not wish to injure him?"

"Yes, I can say that; before God I can say that."

"Well, then, why should you give yourself up to the sheriff? If you could surely prove your innocence, it might be well to surrender. But you cannot, can you?"

"No; there was no one to witness, and my own word and my own reputation will not help me out. My word and my reputation are not worth much in my own home, where I have been known all my life, and where my father's word is as good as the bond of any man in the county."

"Well, you can tell me all that tomorrow. Just now what I want to say is this: you are not guilty of any crime and therefore you are not under any obligation to surrender to the authorities. Furthermore, if you should surrender they would believe only the part of the story that would convict you out of your own mouth. Worst of all, you would grieve and disgrace your own family, and, in doing all this, you would serve no end of justice and no good purpose whatever. If the authorities find the body, let them investigate. We'll neither help nor hinder them. There may be no body to be found. You do not know there is. If trouble comes out of it all, we'll meet it when it comes, honestly; but we are in no way constrained to go out of our way to make trouble. Do you think you have a right to drag your sister's name and your father's name through the mire of a murder trial when you know absolutely that there was no murder?"

"God knows I have worried and disgraced them too long already. I began when I first went to college. My father wished me to attend a school of his choice,

where the habits of the students are supervised and safeguarded, but I insisted upon going to the university because Bill Johnson was attending there. Bill Johnson was the athlete in this neighborhood, and had made a name for himself at the university. I liked athletics also, and Bill said he could help me along; and he did. I made both the football and the baseball team, and was good enough to be a 'feather in Bill's cap.' Then,—so the fellows told me afterward,—Bill became envious of me. I had the luck to make two long runs for a touchdown in the big game of the year, and that night we had a dinner in town. After dinner, Bill took us out and for the first time in my life, I became drunk. I was heartily ashamed of it next day, but, as the others seemed to make a jest of it all, I was glad, too, to pretend that I thought it was only a lark. That was in my junior year. As a senior I played through the football season, but was let out from the baseball team, and was so heavily 'conditioned' in my class work that there was no hope of graduation. So, thoroughly disgusted with myself, I came home. Then, because life on the farm was so slow, after the gay times I had at the university, I began to spend much time in town.

"You have been in Dunsboro, haven't you? Well, there is nothing there but cards and whiskey for the would-be sports; so I took to cards and whiskey. It was a splendid occupation for a college man and—one who should have been at least decent. My good friend Johnson helped me along again. One night,—or rather one morning,—Johnson and I came to blows, and I was put in jail. When I got out, I looked up Johnson and gave him a good beating. Taking a blackened eye with me from the fight, I went down to the city and joined

the regular army under the false name of Walter Long. That was the year before we went to war. When our Government went in, I was sent over. There was some drinking, of course, in the regular army, but I had succeeded in avoiding it, and was regaining a little of my self-respect and was making some plans for the future. Then, one morning when my company was brought back from the front trenches and was put to rest in a barn without breakfast, because our supplies had not come up, a weasel-eyed fellow named Simkins offered me a drink. If you were across you know the condition of our nerves after a night under fire in the trenches. I took the drink, and then another, and, after that, probably as many as Simkins offered me. Before I came to myself, we were lost from our command, and Weasel-eyes told me we had deserted. We shipped as stokers, and got back to this country undiscovered, and, in New York, I succeeded in losing my sinister crony. That was a year ago. Since then I have been, most of the time, in Chicago. But I was determined to come home and make a new start. I arrived in Dunsboro only yesterday evening, and expected to be at home by eight o'clock. Father is away, and sister did not meet me because she had planned some pleasant surprise as is her way, and wished me to arrive at the hour mentioned.

"You can imagine my astonishment when I met my evil genius, Simkins, at the very station. He detected me at once, called me quickly aside, and told me to steal away with him immediately, as the authorities were looking for me as a deserter. Foolishly, I did so. When I questioned him, he became confused and admitted that Johnson had told him to be on the lookout for me,

that Johnson was now his employer in a garage in town; that, years ago, Johnson's father had employed the Simkins family as 'croppers' on the Johnson place, and that, ever since Bill and he had been little boys together Johnson had employed him to do many doubtful pieces of work for him. At last he admitted that it was Johnson, who also was in the service in France, and who had recognized me over there, although I had not seen him, that had him to ply me with whiskey and morphine and to have me desert while under their influence. I did not know what to make of it all because I could not comprehend why Johnson should hate me so. Besides, while Johnson is a cruel fellow, he has never been considered a coward; and, if he is seeking revenge for the drubbing I gave him when I saw him last, it would be more consistent with his disposition to get revenge directly and not through such a character as Tom Simkins.

"But, to finish the depressing story, I promptly told Simkins to leave me, and to mind his own business; that no one could know of my desertion unless either he or Johnson had revealed it, as I was enlisted under another name than my own; and that, since his confession, just made, I could incriminate him and Johnson even worse than they could incriminate me. He left me then, and I chose to walk out home across the fields instead of around by the pike, the way being shorter and I being by that time in no mood to meet anyone. But this poor Simkins seems to have been in terror after confessing Johnson's plots against me and his own part in them, and he had followed me without my knowing it, until almost in sight of the house.

"Just as I neared the creek, he overtook me, and

denied all he had told me; but, when he perceived that I did not believe him, he begged me never to betray him to Johnson, for he knew his employer was a 'bad' man, and he lived in terror of Johnson's anger. I would not make him any promise and, as it was raining now, and harder at every moment, I shook him off and hastened to get across the stream before it became too swollen and before the night became too dark. The best point at which to cross,—that is, the best point near to which I then was,—was only a short distance above a big fall in the creek. At this point the bed is a wide, flat rock, and at this time of the year only a narrow stream flows down the middle, except in rainy weather. Even then the water, though wider and swifter, is still shallow. But a few feet below this crossing place, the bed slopes downward to the edge of the cliff over which the water falls, and the rock is slippery in places with moss and slime, and the water swift enough to carry one over the fall when the stream is up. The plunge of the water has gouged out a hole below, and the pool it holds is large enough and deep enough for one to drown, if he cannot swim. Well, just as I started to cross, this fellow again caught up with me and, when we were near the middle, he took hold of me, and began again begging me never to mention what he had said about Johnson. I was really sorry for the poor fellow, but there we were standing in the middle of the creek in a downpour of rain, and I all the time anxious to get on. I started again, but he held my arm tighter. The water was growing higher and swifter. I felt my feet slipping, and so, wrenching my arm free from his grasp, I gave him a hard push,—as I thought, toward

the bank. But, whether I had lost sense of direction in the darkness and pushed him toward the fall, or whether he slid over in the swift current, I am sure that he went over, for I heard his scream, and then nothing more.

"You cannot get to the pool quickly from above because it has a high bank, or cliff, on three sides, but I hurried down as swiftly as I could, and called his name over and over again. Then I went into the pool and searched under the water as the lightning showed me he was not floating on the surface. He was not in the pool. I could not believe that his body could have floated out and down the stream, as the outlet was not deep and besides flowed through loose stones, which should have stopped him. But, when you told me that you had seen someone in the creek as far down as the cabin, I knew he must have floated over the rocks in some way."

"Maybe not," interrupted Danny; "I was not sure it was a man I saw, and I felt sure it was not after I had searched and found nothing. Morning will tell. But how did you happen to come to the cabin?"

"I used to stop here in my wild days when afraid to meet father or ashamed to meet my sister. We had two negro boys who used to occupy the cabin, and I would make them let me in, to sleep off, in the loft, the effects of my carousing in town. I had no trouble in finding my way tonight, and God knows I did not wish to go to the house in my present plight. I don't know what to do. I cannot think of anything but to go into town and give myself up to the sheriff. I want to look all along the creek to see if I cannot find poor Simkins. I cannot remain here idle until I know."

But Danny now noticed the windows growing grey.

"I'll look at once and let you know. I'll search all the way from the water gate to the pool. I may not be back until after breakfast at the house as Miss Willie Pat wants me to have the car in running order early, and I may have to attend to that before coming back here. If I do not attend to the car, she will want to know the reason, and she must not know yet. Promise me to remain where you are till I come back. You can do no harm by remaining here, while you may do harm by leaving and being seen."

Philip signified his consent to remain, and Danny set out upon his gruesome search.

CHAPTER IV

DANNY MAKES AN ENEMY

WILLIE PAT and Katherine Mitre had gone upstairs immediately after the pleasant little supper. It seems to be the way of women to make themselves cozy, if possible, for the pleasant business of exchanging confidences. But let us not deceive ourselves concerning Miss Willie Pat and Miss Katherine Mitre. Although they sit together chummily in Miss Willie Pat's room, Miss Willie Pat is, at the moment, concealing from her best friend the very thing that is uppermost in her mind, the very thing which, she knew, would interest that friend deeply; for Miss Willie Pat is momentarily expecting the long hoped-for arrival of her brother, Philip.

Throughout all his wanderings, Philip had not neglected his correspondence with her,—a correspondence, not frequent and not always satisfactory, but regular. Regularly he had sent little messages to Katherine Mitre also, although he never wrote to her. Regularly he had promised his sister that he would return home as soon as he could, and by that he meant, as soon as he had regained his full self-respect, and full confidence that hereafter he could keep it. His latest letter, received a few days ago, announced that he was coming. Willie Pat wrote him at once; she could not do otherwise in her joy,—and told him she would not meet him at the train, that she preferred to see him first at

home. He must reach home not later than eight o'clock. Then she planned the two-sided surprise of having Katherine Mitre with her to greet him. And so Katherine had not a thought of the tumult growing, as the hour approached, in the mind of her friend. When the hour had come and gone, Willie Pat became uneasy, anxious and depressed by turns. When the suspense had become unbearable, she hurried alone downstairs to the telephone to call up Mr. Carter, the station agent, and the Colonel at the hotel. Mr. Carter had not seen Philip get off the train, but then Mr. Carter had been busy with many things while the train came and went, and could very easily have failed to notice him. The Colonel had not seen him about the hotel. No one at the hotel had mentioned his arrival, as many surely would have mentioned it, had they seen him. The Colonel thought he could not possibly have arrived. Several other friends in town felt sure he could not have come, else they would have known of it. Some of them, in fact, had been at the train, but none had seen him coming away from the station.

Willie Pat returned slowly up the stairs to her friend, disappointed, crushed, a picture of worry and wretchedness, unable to restrain her secret or her tears any longer.

"I was so happy at the thought of his coming," she sobbed on her friend's shoulder, "only now to be so disappointed! And I had planned to have you here so that you both would have a big surprise and would see each other almost first."

"Don't mind, honey," soothed Katherine. "No doubt something happened at the last minute to prevent his

getting started from Chicago. You will hear an explanation in the morning, and then who knows but that he may be here by this time tomorrow night? Let us just get it off our minds and go to bed early. The storm is nearly over, and the quiet rain on the roof will put us to sleep before we have talked half enough. I feel just certain that he will be home tomorrow night."

Willie Pat was so worried and depressed that she was glad to retire to hide her misgivings and to forget her wretchedness. What Katherine Mitre felt, we do not know; but she seemed happier, more animated, more vivacious, as Willie Pat became more silent and depressed; and, in these widely different moods, the two friends soon fell into slumbers that lasted the whole night through.

Willie Pat awoke in the morning from a dream in which, at the moment, someone was knocking at her door. No one was at the door; the knocking was that of a woodpecker tapping in the great oak tree that shaded her window from the morning sun. The clear call of a robin from further down the slope insisted that she arise; the low plaint of a dove from the woodland beyond the tobacco field sounded dreary as though the day were already old. Then, right outside her window, sang out the mocking bird. From one glorious strain to another he passed quickly as though no single song could tell the sheer joy he felt in living. Willie Pat was entranced. From childhood she had loved the mocking bird best of all singers. This one, making the sky ring, as he perched upon the topmost twig of the giant oak, was surely, thought Willie Pat, a worthy rival of the skylark.

"All the earth and air
With thy voice is loud,"

she quoted, and lay perfectly still to catch every note. But the song abruptly ended, and, in its stead, Willie Pat heard the low purring of the motor of her machine. The new man was faithful and competent, she thought to herself. It must be nearly breakfast time. Willie Pat went to the window and threw open the blinds. It was a glorious morning such as follows only a night of storm, and Willie Pat was one to appreciate its beauty, and would now have delighted in its freshness and radiance were not her attention attracted by the unusual spectacle of the new man running, head up and chest out, with swift and regular strides down the road toward the gate. She watched him until he crossed the branch and entered the cabin. Then she called her friend Katherine and, when she heard the breakfast bell, looked out the window again to see whether the occupant of the cabin were coming up the slope. No moving object was in sight, but, just as she was about to turn away, she saw him step out of the cabin door, and then she started toward the breakfast room, pleased.

At breakfast, the little company of three occupied the same places as on the evening before, the two girls looking fresh as roses after their peaceful sleep, but Danny, despite his morning exercise, appearing haggard and worn. He had missed his morning plunge in the pool, for the thought of the unfortunate Simkins took away all relish for the water, and, despite his pleasure in company, to him charming, he appeared preoccupied as well as worn. His altered appearance did not escape the notice of Willie Pat, who inquired

politely how he had slept. Danny admitted that he had not slept well, and made a favorable impression upon his young employer by saying no more about it. Instead, he directed her attention to the car. He had coaxed the engine to run, but he feared it would not run long. He thought a new distributor would have to be put in, and suggested that she have the car looked over while she was in town.

"Why, then," objected Willie Pat, "I am afraid to start to town in it. Suppose it should let down on the way?"

"I think," replied Danny, "that it will get you safely to town, and back again, for that matter; but it should have attention at once, as there will be trouble until you have a new distributor."

"But suppose it should stop with Katherine and myself on the road! What could we do? Probably you had better come with us and drive."

Danny felt a sudden glow of pleasure, but he gave no hint of it in his reply; for he thought of Philip Armstrong waiting in the cabin, and answered dully:

"I cannot go this morning."

"Surely there is no farm work you can do after the soaking rain. This seems to be the very morning you could most conveniently go."

"No, I cannot go this morning," repeated Danny, and his tone was so dull that it sounded chilling. Then his face flushed, and he added in a manner less cold:

"I should like to go with you but I cannot." Katherine Mitre looked somewhat anxiously, first at her friend and then at the stranger. Willie Pat looked first at Danny and then at her friend.

"Katherine," she said, just as if Danny were not present, "we had better start at once. It may require some time for Mr. Johnson to repair the car."

Danny started at the name of Johnson, but he looked up from his plate only to see the two girls leaving the table in silence and to follow them with his eyes as they walked in silence out of the room. A few minutes later, Miss Willie Pat at the wheel, the girls were coasting down the avenue. A quarter of an hour later they were stepping out of the car before Colonel Mitre's door. Willie Pat had many things to do in town that day. There was shopping;—*it* would take much time. Then, if possible, she wished to find another hand or two for the farm. She wished to inquire further about her brother's arrival, and she wished to have the car repaired. This last should be attended to first of all. She called up the garage, and, when a man came, instructed him to tell Mr. Johnson that she wanted the work done at once. Then she left Katherine Mitre and went directly about her business.

When Willie Pat returned to the Colonel's house at about four in the afternoon, she was tired and dispirited. Her shopping had been unsatisfactory; her search for help on the farm had been a disappointment; her inquiries among intimate friends concerning her brother had resulted in nothing, and her telegram directed to his address in Chicago,—Mr. Carter had told her,—could not be delivered to him as he was no longer there. She wished longingly that her father and brother were home, for she felt so helpless and so very much alone. The only aid in her material difficulties, the only help upon which she had a right to depend, was Danny's,—was the new farmhand's,—and he would

do nothing for her but his required duties, for which she paid. Had he not refused her the small favor of driving her to town, and refused so indifferently as not even to offer a reason for his refusal? He was impossible. She knew she should discharge him, and she thought she probably would; but, at the moment, she felt that she had not the energy nor the courage for any additional trouble. She only wanted night to come so that she could be at home and forget, in sleep, her unaccountable depression. She was about to call up the garage when the Colonel's 'phone rang. The call was from the garage and was for her. It was Johnson speaking, and he informed her that his mechanics said it was impossible to get the car repaired that day as a necessary part would have to be brought from the city. They had already sent the order for it.

"But I want to get home right away," remonstrated Willie Pat.

"Let me take you home,—in a new car that has just come in. It has never been used yet. I'd like for you to ride in it first."

"Oh, no," laughed Willie Pat pleasantly; "I'll just go home in my own car. You can send it around as it is, right away, can you not?"

"Your car is all apart, and we could not possibly get it together again before tomorrow. We'll have the new part by that time. You had better let me take you home. I'm going out that way anyhow, and I might as well take you. Besides, I have something to tell you."

"Well, then, come right away," consented Willie Pat, though her tone was uncertain and her countenance not untroubled.

In a very few minutes Johnson's car glided to the curb before Colonel Mitre's door, and Willie Pat, not wishing Johnson to come in, bade Katherine a hasty good-by and hurried out. Katherine Mitre looked thoughtfully after the car as it disappeared down the street rapidly, but she thought how few minutes after all it would be before Willie Pat would reach home. But, as he left the edge of town, Johnson slowed down, and it was fully five o'clock when he left Willie Pat at her own door. Although she did not ask him in and he did not offer to leave his seat at the wheel, he was evidently loth to go. Willie Pat, her cheeks ruddy from her drive in the fresh air,—or was it, perhaps, from pleasure?—had removed her hat from her shapely head and, while catching up a fine lock that strayed across her cheek, smiled pleasantly as she stood upon the porch, listening to her escort and looking at him with light dancing in her cool grey eyes. But Johnson drove the smile from her lips and the color from her cheek and the light from her eyes with a simple question:

"Where is Philip?"

"Why, he hasn't come," replied Willie Pat without hesitation, but in a tone so altered that Johnson looked at her hard.

"What was the matter?" he asked her.

"I don't know at all. You remember, I told you at the dance that he was to come last night; but he did not get in, and I have not heard from him. I went to the post office while in town today, hoping to find a letter from him, but there was none."

If Willie Pat looked sober, even distressed, Johnson certainly looked puzzled. His admiration,—or more,—for Willie Pat; his sympathy, such as it was, for her

evident distress; his congenital suspicion of others' motives,—even of those who had his liking,—and his habitual concealment of his own motives, combined now to keep him silent.

“I thought he should have got home last night,” he remarked quietly after a moment, and then promptly, but without haste, put the car in motion and called good-by.

It may not be easy to understand the motives or the character of such a man as Johnson, but let us try. To begin with, he belonged to a family, intelligent, strong and successful, but also egotistical, coarse and vindictive, and, in point of family traits, Johnson ran true to type. This family did not, in neighborhood estimation, rank among the highest socially but they were excluded from affairs only which were very particular, small and quiet. Our acquaintance was a Johnson throughout, and the worst characteristics of his nature had been accentuated by his misspent years. By the irony of fate, the two human beings who, he thought, meant most in his life,—for he surely hated the one and thought, at least, that he loved the other,—were brother and sister. Johnson could still turn livid with passion at the recollection of his pummeling at the hands of Philip Armstrong. His craving for vengeance was not one jot diminished by his success in making a deserter of Philip and enmeshing him again in the toils of drink. Neither did his infatuation for Willie Pat, and his apparent willingness to be her slave, soften in the least his unreasoning and implacable hatred of Philip; on the contrary, he himself thought at times that it was the greatest purpose of his life to humiliate

the brother by winning the deepest affection of the sister.

And now, as he drove away from the door, this feeling of vengeance was uppermost, and with it was elation at the thought that its gratification was nearer now than ever before. For Willie Pat had unquestionably enjoyed the ride with him in the new car, and Philip Armstrong was nearer within the reach of his arm; he was a deserter, and he was back home; Johnson had seen him at the station with his own eyes.

And now, as he slowed down in order to open the gate, it occurred to him that Philip Armstrong might be hiding away in the cabin. The man Simkins had taken him in charge right at the station, and Simkins had not returned to work yet. He was probably in the cabin with Philip, and both were probably drunk. He would see for himself.

Stopping the car, he quickly crossed the branch, reached the cabin, and looked boldly in at the door. There sat a young man whom he had never before seen.

"Who are you?" he demanded of Danny, for Danny it was.

"I am the new hand here. I was hired just two days ago."

"Have you seen two men around here today? I am looking for them."

"No, I have not seen any two men about here. What do you want with them?"

"One of them works at my garage, and I need him there at once. He may be hiding in that loft. I'll go up and see."

"Why should your man hide in my loft?" demanded

Danny, incredulous, and blocking Johnson's way in the middle of the room.

"Stand aside, fellow," ordered Johnson, "and don't make yourself any trouble. I'm just going to look in the loft. If I do not find Simkins, there will be no harm done you, at any rate."

But Danny did not stand aside. Instead, he squared himself in Johnson's way, and said:

"You get out of this room, and get off this place or—"

The sentence was not finished because Johnson rushed upon him and, in spite of Danny's clever and stubborn resistance, overpowered him with a smashing blow in the face that sent him sprawling upon the floor, stunned. In a second, Johnson was mounting the ladder to the loft. Half way up, however, he stopped suddenly at the crack of a pistol; for Danny had crawled to his washstand and seized the weapon, and was now covering him with it.

"Come down off that ladder and leave this room at once, or I'll shoot to hit this time," warned Danny through his teeth. Johnson looked as if he would come down and make an end of Danny. In the end, he descended and left the cabin quietly, without a word; and Danny, from the doorway, saw him disappearing, driving toward Dunsboro. When Danny turned back into the room, he was confronted by the pale, set face of Philip Armstrong.

CHAPTER V

A PRISONER "DRESSED UP"

“**A**RE you hurt?” demanded Philip; “are you hurt?”

“Not hurt,” replied Danny; “I am just no good. Do you see how I tremble? Let me lie down on that bed a minute; I feel sick.”

Danny was pale as well as trembling, and his bruised face began to show discoloration. Philip bathed the bruised cheek and swollen eye in cold water, and soon Danny's nerves were steady again.

“There is no doubt that I am coming back fast,” he confided to Philip with some spirit, “and maybe I am not glad to see it! A week ago that tussle and excitement would have put me under again. I'll show that Johnson up in about a month. He is a husky, all right, but he is a clumsy brute. I could dance all around him if I were my old self. But I am coming back, and it won't be long before there is steam in my punch again, and then Johnson will know it.”

“I do not see why you should fight my battles,” said Philip gravely, “and I do not think I can obey your orders much longer to keep hiding. I tell you right now that I'll not hide out again if Johnson comes blustering in here, as he is likely to.”

“I do not think he will come again,” said Danny.

“Yes, he will. You saw him as he drove in with Willie Pat. Well, he'll come again,—and often again if she

will permit him. And he will come here to the cabin, expecting to discover me."

Here, Aunt Millie's bell startled both of them, but only Danny made a movement to go.

"I'll try to find out how things are up at the house," he explained to Philip, "and then, right after supper, we may be able to decide just what to do."

"All right," assented Philip, "I'll await you here."

As Danny went toward the house, he wondered whether he would see Willie Pat. He knew he wished to see her, and he intended to ask for her if necessary. To his pleasure and surprise, she took a seat at the table with him. She looked paler, he thought, than he had ever seen her, and he realized for the first time the weight of the burden this young girl was carrying. Every manly instinct in Danny thereupon asserted itself. He would protect and help his young employer in every way in his power. Not waiting for her to speak, he addressed her:

"Miss Armstrong, I hope you will not think I refused to drive your car to town for you this morning without having a good cause. As I am working for you, it was, of course, my duty to go. It would have been a pleasure also—"

"Never mind, sir," interrupted the imperious young lady, "certainly you should have done as I requested of you; but what I wish you to tell me now is, what did Mr. Johnson want when he went into the cabin a little while ago?"

Danny pointed to his swollen and discolored countenance, where Willie Pat saw one merry eye twinkling naturally and one corner of his mouth turned pleasantly upward, while the second eye glared balefully out

from its mottled and cloudy setting, and the other corner of Danny's mouth showed a rakish and incongruous droop.

"Did he do that to you?" inquired Willie Pat, surprise, sympathy, displeasure in her tone.

"Yes, the cruel man beat me up," admitted the now happy Danny.

"But why?" demanded the girl. "Did he go into the cabin to fight you? I did not think that he even knew you or that you are here."

Danny's sickly half-smile died quite away. For a second or more, he looked Willie Pat in the eye, so directly and with such challenge that she could not sustain it, and had to drop her own pretty lids. Danny, it seems, was assured from his scrutiny, and, standing up from his chair, announced:

"I am going to let someone else tell you all about that. He is down in the cabin now, and you can guess who he is. Were you not expecting someone last night?"

"Who? Brother? Is it brother?"

"You have guesed it, Miss Willie Pat, and it is going to be my pleasure to bring him up here to you."

"Oh, hurry, Mr. Lacey. Tell him not to delay a moment. I'll wait on the front porch, but I can't wait long. So hurry; won't you please?"

Within one minute, Danny stepped into the cabin, announcing:

"Well, Philip, we are going up to the house."

"Have you told Willie Pat?" inquired Philip, his countenance brightening.

"Only that you are here. You can tell the rest for yourself. There is nothing to hide nor be ashamed of.

You absolutely could not have gone to the house last night. You would have worried your sister to death with your fears."

"I know it; let's go. Are you going with me?"

"Just to finish my supper," assented Danny comfortably. "See, there is Miss Willie Pat waiting for you on the front porch."

As they neared the house, the young men parted, Danny going directly to the dining room, and Philip around to the house-front; and thus it happened that neither saw a car glide past the gateway and stop where the cabin and some bushes hid it from view of anyone at the house; and that is why, when Bill Johnson came unseen into the cabin through the rear door, he climbed the ladder to the loft unmolested, and why, to his disappointment, he found no one there at all.

In the meantime, what has become of Simkins? Was that worthy drowned, or had he in some marvelous manner escaped death, and betaken himself off? Not either of these. The precious rogue was at the moment hidden in a thicket somewhat to the rear of the cabin and separated only by a rail fence from the pike, where now stood Johnson's glistening new automobile. From his hiding place he could see both Johnson's machine and the rear door of the cabin through which Johnson had entered. How did he happen to be still alive and so engaged? Some say that there is a special providence that takes care of rogues, though no such thought had ever illuminated Simkins' mind; and, in reality, his escape from proximate death the night before was, after all, more natural than providential.

When Philip, to free himself, had pushed Simkins

away, the fellow who was now hiding in the bushes felt himself slipping, and gave all his attention and effort to the immediate matter of getting out of the creek before sliding over the fall. When, in spite of all of his scrambling, he found himself tumbling from the ledge, he had neither time, nor thought, nor desire, nor opportunity to make much outcry. He sprawled himself out, as men do under such circumstances, to make his fall as safe as might be; and, when he splashed into the pool and came to the surface unhurt, his business still was, not to make a thoroughly useless uproar, but to make an entirely useful struggle to get out of deep water. This he did after some difficulty, and, after a few moments' rest on the bank, started back to town along the path over which he had just come. If he heard Philip's cry, he paid no attention to it, and was intent only upon getting back to food and dry clothes. It so happened that he could there on the spot give himself a warming drink. If it occurred to him at all that Philip might be frightened at his disappearance in the dark, he did not care. Philip could worry if he must. He would like to tell Johnson that Philip tried to drown him: but, then, if Johnson ever found out that he had told Philip of Johnson's self-incriminating plots against him, it would be a bad day's work for Simkins. He paused at the thought. Had he not better avoid Johnson for a while? How could he answer the questions Johnson would be sure to put him? It would never do to see Johnson that night, and Johnson would surely be on the outlook for him, and would be sure to find him if he returned to town. He thought then that he would go to his father's, which was about five miles farther

out; and, only after an hour's walk did he change his mind again. His father had a small holding adjoining, and carved from, the old Johnson place. All the family of Johnsons, except his own employer, lived here, and he did not wish to risk being seen by any of them. He spent the night in a barn, and the next day, loitering and foraging, all the time drawing nearer and nearer the Armstrong place, purposing, subconsciously perhaps, to find Philip Armstrong again, and instinctively seeking him first of all at the old cabin.

In keeping with his slinking manner, he had come on the Armstrong place, not by the gate, but over the fence and into the thicket behind the cabin, and at the very moment, as it happened, that Johnson's shining car swung into sight around the curve just below the spring. So he crouched down where he was, hidden, motionless and silent, until Johnson disappeared within the cabin. Then he moved cautiously to a point in the thicket, whence he could observe the cabin and the machine, without being seen himself. He was very uneasy. He had had a bad night, and a day which, though Simkins himself did not think it at all distressing, had worn upon his not too healthy nerves; for he had wandered in all a goodly distance under the hot sun; he had had very little food, and all too much liquid from the pint bottle in his pocket. The bottle, indeed, was nearly empty as he now drew it out and looked at it.

"Not two left," he muttered, eyeing it critically; "I might as well make it one good one."

This he did. Then, after one intent look at the empty flask, he slid it carelessly down the slope without a word, and turned his attention to the task of extricating something from his trousers' hip pocket. This

proved to be a revolver. Simkins turned this over in his hands, examining it with exaggerated concentration. The examination must have proved satisfactory, for Simkins pronounced this judgment as a result:

"You're a putty little baby, all right; and you're loaded, too;—jes' like me. No, d—n if you are, either. I'm loaded a heap fuller 'n you. Wonder what Johnson would do if I was to let out a yell. He'd come bustin' out o' that there door sure if I was jes' to pull this little trigger;—he'd come out o' there like a bat out o' hell. What the hell is he lookin' 'roun' here for anyway? He ain't got no right follerin' me up and spyin' on me. I ain't goin' to stand no more of it."

Just then Johnson came out, and, without hesitation, walked toward the waiting automobile. Simkins' eyes followed his every step and, as he crossed the fence, the drunken fellow could hardly restrain his impulse to take one shot at him with his revolver. Only fear restrained him.

"But I'm through with you, d—n you," he muttered, "I'm through with you. You ain't goin' to find me no more, and I ain't goin' to do no more of your dirty work. Go on, d—n you," he muttered as the car started; "If I had another drink, I'd drink your partin' health; as I ain't got a partin' drink, I'll just give you a partin' shot. Bang! That's the way she goes from my little gun."

The drunken fellow had, indeed, fired his pistol, aimed indifferently toward Johnson's car just as it turned the curve in the road below the spring. The car slowed down at once, and Johnson stepped out. Simkins stood in terror, ready in a moment to bolt. His eyes were glued upon Johnson. He could not see his

features owing to the distance, but he knew well enough what must be Johnson's cold rage if he thought the unexpected shot was fired at him. For a full minute they stood, Simkins in the thicket, and Johnson looking carefully about, to discover, if possible the origin of the shot. Then Simkins saw him step into the car, but he did not see him put his handkerchief to his ear and draw it away, wet with blood. What he noticed next, as he turned his eyes from the winding line of the now deserted pike, was two young men walking toward him, down the avenue from the house in the grove above, watched eagerly by two women on the front porch, one white and young, the other black and old. Simkins would have been glad to see Philip Armstrong alone, but he contemplated flight as preferable to seeing him with a stranger. Still, he had no reason to flee from here; nor had he, indeed, any better place to go; and so, when he saw Philip and Danny turn from the driveway and make directly toward the cabin, he came quietly out of the thicket and approached the little house from the opposite side. In the open space, he stopped suddenly at the clamor of two female voices, Aunt Millie's carrying for the distance easily, and warning:

"Watch out, Mistah Philip, dar he is behin' de house!"

Danny, who had left the house first at the sound of Simkins' revolver and was overtaken by Philip on the avenue, passed through the cabin and picked up his own weapon; but, once in the back yard, what he saw was anything but hostile or dangerous. Philip's countenance fairly beamed upon the befuddled and aston-

ished Simkins. He led him into the cabin, and called upon Danny to open up his picnic stock and satisfy the wolfish appetite. Then he pressed a cigar upon the dead-come-back, and demanded that he lead them to the fall in the creek and explain the whole accident. As they passed up the creek hollow before the eyes of Willie Pat and Aunt Millie, Willie Pat's curiosity and Aunt Millie's scorn increased with every step in the progress of the unusual group.

"Whar dey gwine wit dat po' white trash? Look at him skulkin' 'long jes' like a whipped houn' dog! Huh! Smokin' a cigar, too! I wouldn't trust him no fur n' I could see him; not dat fur even."

But Willie Pat had not remained to hear. She had run, on a sudden and natural impulse, to the telephone, to call up Katherine Mitre. The Colonel had answered, and Willie Pat was saying:

"Never mind, Colonel; you will do just as well. I want Katherine to come out. Tell her to get ready right away. I'll send for her. You say you'll bring her out, Colonel? Oh, that's so nice of you. You are sure you were going out driving anyhow? All right, Colonel; I have so much to tell Katherine, and so much to tell you, too."

Half an hour later, Willie Pat, sitting on the porch alone, heard footsteps and, looking up, saw Philip approaching.

"Where are your friends?" she inquired.

"They have gone their ways, Danny to the cabin, and Simkins to sleep in the tobacco barn. He is worn out."

"Simkins! Is that the low thing that has caused so much trouble?"

"That's the same precious bird."

"Well, what is he doing here?"

"I rather think he is hiding from Bill Johnson."

"He had better hide somewhere else; and the farther from here the better, I should think."

Philip paused before replying; for, while he thought his sister intended only to express her aversion to the fellow Simkins, he feared that she might possibly mean that Johnson was certain to be a visitor at his home.

"What do you mean, sister?" he at length inquired. "Does Johnson come out here often?"

"He comes as often as I let him."

"I do not blame him for that, sis; but I hope you do not let him come very often."

"Why do you hope that, Philip? What is the matter with Mr. Johnson?"

"Well, he is the worst enemy,—I should say, the only enemy,—I have; and, as an enemy, he is good; few can beat him. He is dangerous. But that is not the thing. I had rather have him as an enemy than to see you have him as a friend. He is not fit to associate with you at all, sister."

"I do not know what to think of him," admitted Willie Pat slowly. "He is always nice to me; nicer than almost any other of the boys; he is certainly entertaining. I enjoy his company; but somehow I never like to make an engagement with him; and today I thought I hated him when I saw what he had done to Danny,—I mean, to the new hand. Do you think we should give Mr. Lacey a room in the house, now that you are at home again?"

"I certainly think we should; and moreover I insist upon it."

"Well, we'll do it then."

Willie Pat turned her head to one side as if listening, for her waiting ear had heard the click of the gate. She stood up and, laying her hand upon Philip's shoulder, ordered him:

"Sit right where you are, and don't dare stir an inch until I call you."

Philip smiled good-humoredly and obeyed. Willie Pat hastened into the house only to pass out quickly again by the side porch, and tripped down the avenue to greet the Colonel and Katherine. She pulled Katherine bodily out of the conveyance, and ordered the Colonel to drive on; but she gave him a warning look and a warning shake of her finger, which the Colonel wisely enough interpreted as meaning silence, on his part at least. She hurried Katherine into the house with promises of a mighty lot of news to tell her, took her into the big parlor, and ordered her not to stir from the room till she returned. She reached the front porch again just as the gentlemen were taking their seats and, after shaking the Colonel's hand and telling him what a sweet old friend he was to come out so promptly, she asked Philip to go to the parlor for a box of cigars, which he would find, she thought, lying on the piano. And so it was that Willie Pat's surprise was brought about after all and that the little party of four, some fifteen minutes later, were having a happy time together when, for the second time that day, Johnson's car drew up the driveway to the house. Johnson, though his arrival completely altered the spirit of the company, was civilly received, and all, excepting perhaps Philip, were having some enjoyment, when Willie Pat turned to her brother and asked:

"Why do you not go and ask Mr. Lacey up? He is surely lonesome down at the cabin by himself. Besides, we shall want him to take his room in the house to-night."

"I'll go and get him right away," assented Philip, arising. "I don't know what I could have been thinking of to have forgotten him."

"You'll not find him there now," here put in Johnson. "The sheriff has just taken him away. He is probably in jail by this time."

The Colonel and the two girls cried out their amazement at this announcement. Philip looked sharply at Johnson, but his eyes were cold as steel, and he remained in stony silence.

"But what did the sheriff want him for?" demanded the Colonel with strange truculence, for it seemed as if the others had lost their speech.

Johnson arose and, taking up his cap, said:

"The sheriff took him off just as I drove up the hill. I admit that I had something to do with the arrest, but do not judge me in advance. You will learn the truth in the morning."

CHAPTER VI

A RED SKY AND AN ANXIOUS VIGIL

WHEN Johnson had gone, the certain mild excitement,—if excitement one might call it,—of the little party on the porch, found freer expression. Everyone present had felt some interest in Danny; for, although but a few days among them, and although occupying a more or less menial position, the farm hand had, one way or another, been brought already into rather close association with every one. The Colonel, who had from the first taken a strong fancy to the young man, stormed at the stupidity of the County officials, and darkly hinted at some villainy on the part of Johnson. Philip held his peace, and the stern, set look of his countenance gave but faint indication of the intensity of his feeling or the swiftness of his thoughts; for, in Danny's arrest, Philip could see only the hand of Johnson, and he was at the moment determined, not only to thwart Johnson's design, whatever it might prove to be, but also to get Danny out of jail that very night, if that were in any way possible. He was indignant, therefore, when Katherine Mitre offered the suggestion that, after all, they should not be surprised at the turn of events as Danny was, when all was said, an entire stranger,—and strange even for a stranger,—and she was spared from hearing a heated retort from her lover, only by her father's brusque interruption:

“Nonsense, daughter; don't be silly. You know

nothing at all of character. You are no judge, at any rate, of the character of young men."

"Yes, I am, too, father," protested Katherine.

Involuntarily she glanced at Philip, and the confused looks and blushes of the two furnished delicious amusement to the Colonel and Willie Pat. Philip carried the situation off well by speaking up to admit that the joke was on him, and the laughter that followed lifted wonderfully the spirits of the little company, so that Philip's voice sounded care-free and resonant when he said:

"Colonel, let us go into town and see what the matter is, and get Danny out of jail. It is a shame to let him remain there over night. If we cannot induce the judge to act at once, we may at least arrange to have him release Danny in the morning. The judge will give him his preliminary trial then at latest, and that will be tantamount to releasing him. Katherine can stay with Willie Pat while I am away, and, if the girls are afraid, I can call Simkins from the barn and have him remain here on the porch until I get back."

"No, thank you, brother dear," mocked Willie Pat. "You may leave your precious Simkins safe in his barn,—have you got him in a stall? And I will not keep Katherine, either, unless she prefers to remain. There is no need of it in the least. Aunt Millie and I shall have no fears whatever. Besides, you will be back early, shan't you?"

"Oh, yes," assented Philip. "If we start at once, I should be able to interview the judge before he goes to bed, and maybe Danny and I will walk back together. If I cannot find the judge or cannot induce him to take action tonight, then I'll go around and chat with Danny

a little while before returning. But, in any case, it will not be late."

And so Philip rode away with the Colonel and his daughter in the Colonel's old surrey, and Willie Pat, after watching them until they were swallowed up in the darkness, turned and, seating herself upon the porch steps, rested her head against a pillar, and gazed long into the deep, starry sky. The stars were unusually bright, it seemed, tonight, especially the larger and nearer ones, which Willie Pat thought she had never seen more soft or more luminous.

"The silence almost sings," murmured the girl, "it keeps one so aware of it all the time."

The great silence of the hills was, indeed, all around her, the silence of the hills in the early nights of summer. No chorusing of young frogs nor call of kildees came up from the "branch" as it used to come in the recent springtime; no dry, insistent clamor of katydids enlivened the trees as it would soon in the later summer and early fall; no moaning now of the winds in bare branches as in the stormy winter weather. Not even a whippoorwill nor a distant mocking bird uttered a bubble of sound into the sea-like silence. Only a faint murmur of the brook floated up, a low, steady monotone from the fall of water into the distant pool accompanying a sweeter, more varied treble from the "riffle" near Danny's cabin. Danny's cabin! It was of Danny that Willie Pat was thinking now. It was because she wished for time to think that she had let Katherine Mitre go.

Willie Pat, kind reader, had a clear and vigorous mind. She knew that what happened to Danny concerned her really. To lose a farm hand just now was

no laughing matter; to be required possibly to go into court and give public testimony,—no matter of what nature,—would be very embarrassing to her, to say the least; if Johnson, as the Colonel had hinted, was Danny's enemy, she must choose, at least in her own mind, to stand upon one side or the other. This she knew. And now it came over her suddenly that there could be no doubt as to which side in the quarrel must be hers. Danny was noble-minded, Danny was clean-minded, Danny was generous, Danny was chivalrous, Danny was warm-hearted and impulsive, Danny was dark-haired and blue-eyed and straight and graceful and handsome. Ah, Willie Pat, you also are generous and warm-hearted and loyal, and even your very clear mind must act strongly now, lest your warm heart run away with it. Willie Pat, suppose this stranger, Danny, is a *criminal*? You do not know. Is he not an entire stranger? Is he not strange for a stranger even, as Katherine said? Strange? What was strange about him except that he was different? Was he to be suspected because he was not like the common run? It was unkind of Katherine to mention such a thing. Johnson was at the bottom of the deplorable situation. Johnson was jealous. Had it come to this? Had she encouraged Johnson so far that now he deemed that he had a right to be jealous of her. The thought was startling. Willie Pat was clean and wholesome in her whole being. She knew Johnson was not. Willie Pat was the soul of honor; Johnson's honor she did not trust. He was strong, handsome, accomplished, widely admired, but he was not her sort. Her mother, were she living, would worry over the growth of their acquaintance. But Danny?

"No," Willie Pat breathed aloud, "mother would not worry about Danny. I understand why. Danny has the soul of a gentleman. Now I understand why I have always been afraid of something in Johnson; he has not the soul of a gentleman. His finished manners do not hide the repelling thing beneath."

Far in the western sky the evening star was sinking toward the horizon. Willie Pat's wide, grey eyes gazed at it steadily and with a troubled, longing look. In the distance, beneath the star, lay the little graveyard where her mother slept.

"Mother," whispered the girl, "I am going to be a good daughter. Make me know what you would wish, for I am *sure* that would be right, and I will try so hard to do it. But, mother, *do* like Danny. Your spirit can guide him as it often guides me, mother. And maybe he needs help now."

Tears were by this time glistening in Willie Pat's eyes, but they were not bitter tears. She arose and, with a parting look toward the setting star and the restful little cemetery, passed sedately into the house.

Sometime in the night, Willie Pat awoke from a sweet and peaceful slumber. The faint glow in her room made her wonder whether it could be already dawn. But no; the light upon her walls was tinged with red. Also, if it were dawn, her *four* windows would be alight, whilst now certainly only two were glowing. These two faced toward town.

"It is a fire in the city," reflected Willie Pat, as she arose to go to a window. The view confirmed her judgment. A broad strip of the western horizon was a dull, sullen red, and beneath the middle of this strip was an angrier, brighter spot about which at moments, Willie

Pat thought she could detect the tips of flame-tongues. She went to call Philip, but, receiving no reply to her summons, opened his room door. He was not there. Willie Pat lighted a match. The clock on Philip's mantel showed *one*. Dismayed somewhat, Willie Pat returned to her own room to watch the fire. It had died down noticeably, but the young watcher thought she could hear a crackling she had not noticed when the flames were at their height. But no, it was not the crackling of burning timbers, Willie Pat judged. It was a sputtering, popping sound, as of firearms. One of the hardware stores it was that burned down, and now the heat was exploding the stock of cartridges and shotgun shells. That would be dangerous for every one nearby. She hoped that Philip for once would not be so venturesome as to be near at hand. No doubt, though, it was precisely the fire that had detained him. Nervous and disturbed, she was about to return to her pillow when she heard Aunt Millie calling her:

"O Miss Willie! O Miss Willie!"

"What is it, Aunt Millie?"

"Kin I come up?"

There was a catch in the old negress' voice that made Willie Pat assent at once.

"Come up, Aunt Millie," she called; "what is the matter?"

When Aunt Millie entered the room, she was uttering subdued sobs.

"Light the lamp, Aunt Millie, and let me see you; and tell me what is the matter."

Aunt Millie did as she was directed, and then sat down upon a padded stool beside the bed. Willie Pat gazed at her, at first in surprise, then with impatience,

but last with great pity, for the faithful old woman was a picture of abject misery.

"Aunt Millie," now spoke Willie Pat in her kindest tone, "now tell me what is the matter."

"Oh, Miss Willie, 'taint right fo' de white folks to shoot dat boy. He didn't set 'at house afire. He was home wif his own mammy dat night, case I know he was."

"I don't know what you are talking about, Aunt Millie. Who has shot any boy?"

"Didn't yo' hear dem shots an' see de fire in town jes a while ago. I bet de mob done shot him an' burnt de jail up case dey was so mad."

Willie Pat's heart jumped. If the jail was burnt—

"Dat boy was a good boy," continued Aunt Millie. "He worked fo' Mr. Porter fo' three years an' done everything jes' like he was tole. Mr. Porter sent him away case he smashed up de automobile tryin' to pass a big machine on de hill, and den, when de house burn down dat night, folks said he done it, an' he was arrested an' put in jail."

"I had not heard anything of that, Millie. Who is Mr. Porter?"

"He lives over in Stoniwah County. Dey brought de colored boy here for fear of a mob. But I reckon de mob got him anyway."

"What colored boy is it?"

"He's my sister's boy, Peter,—my sister Lucy. She used to live down dar in de cabin 'fo' you was born. Den she married dat no 'count nigger from Stoniwah County an' moved over dar. It aint right, Miss Willie, fo' you all white folks to kill us niggers dat way."

"It is never right to commit murder, Aunt Millie,"

replied Willie Pat, "and I hope you are mistaken about a mob in town tonight. Where did the mob come from? There has been no excitement in Dunsboro. And why should a mob come from away off to get Peter? Now, if he had killed someone, relatives and neighbors might be so incensed as not to risk waiting for the law to act; but, you say, the worst thing charged against him is burning this Mr. Porter's house."

"He didn't burn de house, I tole you. He was wif his own mammy. What made de people so mad, I reckon, was because one of de chillun was hurted gittin' her out of de fire, an' she died de other night."

"How do you happen to know all this, Millie?"

"Some niggers tole me. Dey was down by de spring, an' when I went down to fix de bucket while you all was on de front po'ch, I was talkin' to 'em. De bucket got jammed at de turn, an' I went down to fix it. Dey said dey was f'm Stoniwah County an' was goin' into Dunsboro."

"I hope it is all untrue, Millie, and I won't believe it until we know for sure. Philip will surely be home now at any minute, and he can tell us whether it is true or not. There's the gate now,—did you hear it? It is Philip, I am sure."

Willie Pat was right, for in a few minutes she heard Philip's key in the lock and Philip's foot upon the stair. She stopped him as he passed along the hall to his own room, and made him come in. He did not seem surprised at finding her awake and with Aunt Millie. He looked pale and preoccupied.

"What detained you so long, Philip?" she inquired;

"and what was the fire, and the noise like shooting? Tell me quickly."

"Did dey all kill Peter, Mr. Philip? Did dey kill him?"

Surprised at these questions, Philip looked at his latest questioner, and answered her first. There was something in Aunt Millie's worried countenance that touched him.

"No," he spoke slowly, "Peter has not been killed. No one has been killed, I believe."

"T'ank de Lord!" ejaculated Aunt Millie, as she began to rock herself back and forth upon the stool, to which she somehow seemed frozen.

"Was it the jail that burnt?" questioned Willie Pat eagerly. "And what of Danny? Philip, tell me," she commanded, as Philip hesitated, as if to consider.

"Danny is all right," at length replied her brother.

Relieved as Willie Pat was at this announcement, she did not find it fully satisfactory, and the now distinctly humorous smile that broke over Philip's pale countenance provoked in her a further sense of mystery.

"Why don't you tell me?" she demanded.

For answer he said: "Aunt Millie ought to go to bed. We shall want breakfast early tomorrow morning, and she should be asleep."

"Aunt Millie has been so worried, Philip. Tell her again that no harm has come to Peter, and then she will go to bed and sleep soundly."

Philip loved his sister dearly, but dearly, too, he loved to tease her.

"Peter," he announced judicially, "is as safe from harm as Danny. Just as safe. Just exactly as safe."

"Oh, *Philip*," reproved Miss Willie Pat impatiently; and then:

"Aunt Millie, go down to bed. You'll need your rest. I am so glad Peter is safe."

"Danny, too," put in Philip as Aunt Millie passed through the doorway, moaning to herself in comfort. "Aren't you glad that Danny is safe?"

"Philip," replied Willie Pat soberly, "of course I am glad that Mr. Lacey is safe, for I have been afraid. But you have been so unsatisfactory. Now, tell me what kept you so late, and what was the excitement in Dunsboro?"

"There was plenty of excitement," declared Philip, "and it is not all over yet. And, believe me, sis, your friend Danny was right in the midst of it. I'll tell you all about it in the morning; but you tell me now what was the matter out here. And what was Aunt Millie up here for, and what was she all excited about? Has anything been going wrong? That fellow Simkins was on my mind all the time,—except while things were hottest."

"We have not seen nor heard of Simkins since you left. Aunt Millie was all wrought up about her sister's boy, Peter. She thought they were lynching him in Dunsboro when she saw the flames and heard the sound of guns. Some strange negroes told her all about the trouble in Stoniwah County."

"Where did she see these negroes from Stoniwah County?"

"She said she saw them down by the spring, and that they were going into Dunsboro."

"Oh—o—o—h," ejaculated Philip. Then: "Well, I'll be — —."

"What? What do you mean?"

"Well, I'll be — —," repeated Philip.

"Philip," cried Willie Pat, stamping her foot. "You are forgetting yourself! Can't you do anything but stand there informing me that you'll be — —? Can't you tell me what has happened and what they have done?"

"No, sis. There has been so much to happen that I cannot tell it all at once. I am just beginning to understand it myself; but I'll tell you the things you want to know most, and then you must go to sleep. You can hear all about the rest in the morning. For one thing, then, Danny is out of jail. But he is not acquitted, and he is not out on bond; he simply took 'French leave.' We shall see him, very probably, tomorrow morning. The negro in jail was not hurt at all, so Aunt Millie need not worry; the mob did not catch him nor scratch him. He is out of jail also. You may see him in the morning, too, if you want to."

Willie Pat ignored the provoking grin that accompanied this, and Philip continued:

"The fire didn't amount to anything; it was only the old barn that still stood on the vacant lot where the Todd house burnt down a few years ago. The shots you heard did not amount to anything, either. They were not fired at anyone and did not strike anyone. It was just some nigger doings in another part of town. I did not see the judge at all as he was out of the city, but I saw the sheriff just before leaving, and he admitted that it was Johnson that had sworn out the warrant for Danny's arrest. The charge was, shooting at and wounding. You remember hearing that shot this afternoon from down toward the cabin? It was

Simkins, no doubt, that fired it. No one else was about. No wonder Johnson was angry; though he escaped narrowly enough, for the ball grazed his ear. Of course, we can easily prove that Danny did not fire it. Well, I'm going to bed; so, good night, sis. Aren't you glad everything is all right after the excitement?"

Willie Pat was glad; and in a few moments she and all the lately disturbed household were peacefully asleep.

CHAPTER VII

THE GOVERNOR FACES THE MOB

WHILE all in the big house were sinking into slumber, Danny Lacey was sitting in his cabin, wide awake. He occupied the wooden rocker, the one comfortable chair in his room. This chair he had drawn into the corner, and in it he now leaned back, with his feet extended so as to rest upon a round of the ladder leading to the loft. He had never taken this position before, but then he had never before had a prisoner jailed in the little room above.

"I'm both a jailer and a jailbird now," quoth Danny to himself. "The Lord only knows what I'll be in another twenty-four hours."

He settled himself to sleep, worn out with the work and excitement of the day, and trusting to the position of his feet upon the ladder to make it impossible for Peter to escape from the loft without awakening him,—for it was Peter that was now snoring above, the snores adding to Danny's confidence and somnolence equally. While he sleeps, let us recount what had befallen him since the sun had set.

After his supper that evening, Danny had gone down to the cabin, intending to pack his belongings in preparation for moving them up to his new room in the house. Also he intended to groom himself somewhat and to go up and join the company. He wished first to give them time for those intimate greetings and confi-

dences which are natural to close and warm friends, and in which he could not share as yet, and then to pay his respects as a matter of duty. Danny experienced some pleasure in anticipation of his visit. Vaguely he felt that Philip and Katherine Mitre would engage each other's attention and that, somehow, there was a happy hour ahead of him in the company of that charming Miss Willie Pat. Danny got out his evening clothes and tried them on. He had no intention, of course, of wearing them to the house; but, nevertheless, he put them on as they helped make more real the glowing fancies that filled his mind;—a great ball somewhere, and a grey-eyed partner who fairly floated over the floor with him, and whose every word thrilled and delighted and wonderfully uplifted him. Now, it happened that these evening clothes, so much in keeping with Danny's fancies, served him a much more useful purpose later on in the night; for, while he was putting the finishing touches to his toilet, the door was darkened by the bulky form of the sheriff of the county, who, as we have already been informed, had come to arrest him. At first, Danny laughed at the sheriff, thinking that someone was playing a joke upon him. When he realized that the officer was in earnest and that the warrant was genuine, he still took the matter lightly as he knew he was not guilty of any offense against the law, and was only in a hurry to get into town to extricate himself from his strange predicament. So he offered no resistance, and asked for no delay, but jumped into the sheriff's car, dressed as he was, and rode away, glad that he had not disturbed the family at all over this latest turn of his fortunes. He sobered down considerably, nevertheless, as he rode into town,

when assured by the sheriff that measures to clear him could not possibly be taken that night and that he must spend the night in the county jail. Were it not that the judge was out of town, there might be a possibility; but the judge was down in the city and would not return before the next evening. So Danny was put in jail.

"It's awful warm tonight," remarked the jailer, a pleasant fellow and a good judge of his fellow man. "I'm not going to make you stay in a cell till you are ready to go to bed. You may remain out here in the corridor if you wish to. There's some breeze stirring here."

Danny thanked the kind fellow cordially.

"It is my first time in a house like this," he told the jailer with a smile, "and I don't know just how you treat prisoners, but I am sure you are doing me a favor, and I appreciate it."

"Well," said the jailer, "I want you to do me a favor also. You know I live in this building with my family, but I have been so busy this evening that I have not had time to get my supper. I want to have supper now. You can have the freedom of this corridor. I wish you would look out that end window every once in a while, and, if you see a crowd gathering or anything that looks suspicious to you, just stick your head out the window at the other end and call me. Our rooms are in the wing that runs back that way. I don't look for nothing to be stirring, but you just let me know if anything does, won't you?"

"I certainly will," replied the mystified though grateful Danny.

The jailer went down the stair and locked the door

at the foot. Danny took his first look out the end window facing the street. It was a back street, very quiet. For five minutes Danny gazed about but saw no human being on it. He turned away, intending to see what he could from the window at the other end of the corridor. As he moved toward it, he noticed there were cells along the corridor, four on either side, and all unoccupied, apparently. But not in fact.

"Boss! Boss! Come over by dis do', please suh!" came a pleading voice in a half whisper.

Danny turned back. In one of the middle cells was a negro man of about twenty years. He was gripping the bars of his cell door and looking pleadingly into Danny's eyes.

"Boss, dere's a mob comin' to git me tonight, an' I aint done nuthin'; can't you he'p me git out?"

"Just wait a minute," directed Danny, who went again to the window overlooking the street. There was nothing stirring.

"How do you know there is a mob coming after you?"

"I got word f'm some colo'd friends of mine."

"Does the jailer know it?"

"I tole him, but he don't b'lieve me."

"How did your friends get you word?"

"Dey wrote me a letter."

"That's a slow way of getting ahead of a mob. I shouldn't be afraid if I were you. What have you done?"

"I aint done nuthin', boss; nuthin' 'tall. But dey's a mob comin', I know. It wasn't no letter th'ough de post-office; they th'owed it up to me f'm de alley behin' dis cell. Here it is."

Danny took the crumpled piece of paper which the

frightened negro passed out through the bars, and read:

"They are comin' after you tonight. Ef you can git out we can git you away. They are sivin of us."

Danny reflected for a moment. Somehow, he believed this negro, believed he was innocent. He believed a mob was coming. He believed the negro's colored friends were at hand to do what they could to help him.

"Have you shown this note to the jailer?" inquired Danny.

"Naw suh, I ain't; it might git my frens in trouble."

"It would convince the jailer that he may expect a mob."

"Can't you git me out, boss? Can't you do nuthin' to git me out?"

"I'm a prisoner myself," replied Danny, smiling. But he sobered quickly. The situation was serious. To have the quiet broken by the fury of a mob, this negro boy murdered, the law trampled under foot, further bloodshed perhaps, and then sorrow and shame in numerous households,—this was all too bad a thing to permit to happen if it could be prevented. But what could he do? He went to the street window again and looked out anxiously. To his relief, there was not even now a soul in sight; the sputtering arclight showed that plainly enough. It was now about half past nine. Many homes in the drowsy little town were already darkened for sleep, and the streets would soon be quite deserted. The mob, if there were a mob, would soon find its time to do its work and to get out of town and safe home before daylight. Danny was about to go to the rear window to call the jailer when he heard the

door at the foot of the stairway unlocked and footsteps coming up. Presently the jailer appeared, followed by Philip Armstrong. Philip stepped forward and grasped Danny's hand.

"I'll leave you here with the gentleman for ten minutes, Mr. Phil," remarked the jailer. Then: "You didn't see any signs of trouble, I reckon?" he inquired of Danny with a pleasant look.

"No," replied Danny, "I have not seen a soul stirring on this street. But, say, you are coming back at the end of ten minutes, aren't you?"

"Yes, I'll be back," replied the jailer, as he went down the steps.

When the jailer had gone, Danny quickly laid before Philip what he conceived to be the situation regarding the expected mob, and urged and conjured him to do what he could to help protect the frightened and dejected Peter in case the mob materialized.

"How about yourself?" asked Philip.

"Oh, I'll be all right."

They were standing near the window at the end of the corridor farthest from the street. This window looked down upon the back yard of the jail. The yard was flanked along the right by a high stone wall separating it from the alley; along the back by a tobacco barn; and along the left by the wing of the jail which was occupied by the jailer and his family. Part of the enclosure was given over to a vegetable garden, the space near the private quarters being occupied by a grass plot, in which stood two apple trees. In the shadow of the trees Danny believed he detected a movement. He called the attention of Philip. Both now perceived the figures of three men. As they peered intently at

them, a fourth figure came out of a small patch of corn near the alley wall. Their intense interest was heightened to a point of expectancy when they beheld three more figures moving silently out of the shadow of the tobacco barn to join the four beneath the trees.

"Seven," whispered Danny. "They must be Peter's friends. Watch them close."

The seven were yet standing stock still and silent when the jailer returned. Philip made him a sign to make no noise and, when he had quietly joined them near the window, pointed out the seven silent figures. The jailer plainly showed his alarm.

"By George, it looks like trouble," he whispered.

"Get us out of here," urged Philip, "myself and your two prisoners. Take us over into a room in your house. You can call up the sheriff, and I'll help you keep the prisoners and be on hand to help you slip them away, if later you find that necessary."

"I'll take you all to the house," consented the jailer, "but I'm not going to be in any hurry about letting the prisoners off the premises. Come on right away."

He quickly and quietly opened the negro's cell door and led the way down the stairs. Through a door usually kept locked and bolted, he passed with the oddly assorted group into the house and on through a short hallway to a rear room with two windows giving upon the garden, where still stood the silent seven who were the cause of the jailer's alarm. Here, after locking the door, the jailer's first care was to peer through the window. The dim figures of the seven men were still to be seen beneath the apple trees. The jailer took a pair of handcuffs from his pocket and slipped them over the wrists of the frightened Peter.

"Peep from that window," he ordered, "and tell me what you see under the apple trees."

Peter looked.

"Dey's some men out dere," Peter said, unable to suppress a smile of delight.

"How many do you see?" demanded the jailer.

"I kin see seben men," replied Peter.

"Are they your friends?" whispered Danny. "Don't be afraid; tell us."

"Yassuh, dey is," admitted Peter. "How come I know is dat dere big long one. Dat's Runnin' Bob."

"Call Bob over here to the window, but don't make much noise," ordered the jailer.

Peter called out: "Bob, oh Bob, come over here. Bob," he repeated, "slip over here to dis window. It's Peter. Come here quick."

The tallest of the figures slowly and noiselessly approached, the others straggling at a short distance behind him. But suddenly there broke upon the ears of the silent groups on either side the casement, a loud pounding, apparently at the front door of the jail. The negroes started as if to clear the premises. Peter cowered, and begged pitifully for protection. The jailer turned pale.

"Wait for me here," he said, and left quickly for the front door.

Danny spoke up. "Philip," he ordered, "you go with these boys and raise a rumpus of some kind that will draw the mob's attention for a few minutes. That will give the jailer time to get Peter away. Here's the jailer now. What is it, jailer? Is it a mob?"

"Not yet," replied the jailer. "There were only four men demanding that I give them the keys of the jail.

I refused, and they said they would bring the rest along and break in. They'll be here in a minute, no doubt."

"I'll hold them off a while," cried Danny. "Come and stand outside the door with me. I'll talk to them. Come on."

The jailer went with Danny, fastening the room door after him. He unlocked the front door, and stood outside. The mob was coming. Quiet and determined, they were advancing from the left, perhaps seventy-five men in all, and all unmasked. When in front of the jail they halted, and for a moment they hesitated, still in the street, no one venturing to step upon the sidewalk first. Danny stepped forward. In his full dress, tall, straight and commanding, he impressed the crowd before he spoke. He held up his hand for silence.

"How many of you men want to be carried away from here, dead?" he demanded, in a pointed but practical tone.

Silence from the mob was his only reply.

"Does anyone here wish to be taken home to his wife and children a corpse? If so, where is he?"

There was some muttering among the crowd, but no articulate reply.

"How many of you men are murderers, I say?"

A pause.

"Well, it is as I know. None of you are murderers yet. Do you want to go away from here, every one of you a murderer, and some of you most certainly dead? Now, listen to me. As Governor of this State, I am here to enforce the laws of the State against you if you do not obey them!"

"Governor, h—l!" roared a voice from the crowd. "He's a d—d jailbird himself!"

This disconcerting remark was no bigger a surprise to Danny than was the familiarity of the voice that bellowed it. Looking quickly in the direction of the voice, he recognized Johnson, and, not far behind Johnson, on the sidewalk across the street, the sheriff who had arrested him. Danny was quick to recognize the fact that it began to look bad for him and for his gubernatorial speech. But Danny had been an athlete and a debater in college, and the coolness there acquired stood by him now. "If that man speaks again, I'll order the sheriff to put him under arrest on a charge of sedition. Mr. Sheriff, you know me personally. I command you to step forward and take your place with the jailer here, and to answer the questions I shall put to you for the enlightenment and satisfaction of this gathering of indignant citizens. Mr. Sheriff, come forward!"

The sheriff, puzzled beyond words, advanced and stood by the jailer. The crowd did not know what to expect, but none of them believed at all that Danny was a prisoner, and most of them thought they were face to face with the Governor of the State. In his fine attire, he certainly looked the part. There was a growing impatience among them, but still enough curiosity to hold them in restraint. Danny played upon this curiosity.

"Remain where you are," he ordered the crowd. "Remain where you are for five minutes longer. The sheriff — — —"

At this moment a volley of firearms was heard, seemingly about two town-squares to the rear of the mob. The crowd turned to look, and saw the sky above lighted as if by flames.

"They've got soldiers after us," shouted a voice.

"Get the d——d nigger before the soldiers reach here," roared another.

Danny raised his hand and for another moment held the crowd, which was now swaying, hesitating.

"I'll send an order to the military at once to cease firing," he cried. "The sheriff will deliver it. Then, before you break the law, and before the law breaks your bones, leave this town at once and go peaceably to your homes!"

Danny quickly scribbled something upon a piece of paper handed him by the jailer, and the sheriff, to whom the jailer had been whispering, stepped up to receive it.

"Swear me in as a deputy," whispered Danny hastily to him, "and I'll get the prisoner away to safe-keeping while you are gone. I'll report to you tomorrow."

The sheriff readily whispered the oath while Danny completed his writing and held up his hand to swear. The crowd mistook the movement for attention. But Johnson called out again:

"That d——d fraud is not the Governor! He is making fools of you all!"

Another hothead yelled: "Get the nigger!"

But the firing was heard again as the sheriff rushed off, and many wavered. Perhaps a score of the angriest and most determined had the courage to rush forward to break into the jail.

"Get inside, quick!" Danny urged the jailer. They pushed inside and locked the door behind them just in time to escape the attack.

"Offer them the key," Danny commanded; but the jailer hesitated.

"It will be all right," assured Danny. "I'll be gone with the prisoner before they can get in. Offer it quickly before they go around behind. I want to get out that way."

Danny hurried away. He found the room door locked.

"Quick! Give me the key to this room before you admit them!" he cried to the jailer. The key was passed, and Danny was soon in the room and locking the door behind him. He heard the jailer unlocking the door at the foot of the stairway, then the rumble of the crowd upstairs.

"Peter!" he called, "Peter!" but there was no response. The room was deserted. Had the negro escaped? Philip and the seven negroes *could* have taken him away; but by himself and unaided he could not have climbed the high stone wall with his hands manacled. He must, therefore, be somewhere in the yard. Danny stole quietly through the window. He passed under the apple trees, moving toward the tobacco barn at the rear, calling in a whisper: "Peter! Peter!" Now he was moving along the side of the barn, going toward the high wall by the alley. "Peter! Peter!" he kept repeating.

"Here I is, boss, in de barn," he heard Peter's voice in a muffled tone.

"How do you get in there?" inquired Danny. "Tell me quickly."

"Dere's a loose plank in de wall over dere near de end o' de barn by dat stone wall. Dat's where I got in."

Danny started swiftly toward the stone wall, but was detected almost immediately by some of the searchers in the jail.

"There he is!" cried a voice from an upstairs window overlooking the yard. "Come on quick! Everybody!"

The uproar of the mad rush through the corridor and down the stairs was painfully audible to Danny as he swung the loose end of the plank aside and slipped into the barn.

"Peter," he called quietly, "don't you so much as breathe. They saw me and are coming."

Now they were in the yard, every shadowy nook of which was quickly overrun.

"He's got out!" cried the same voice that had at first sounded the alarm. "Over the wall, quick! He was running for the wall when I saw him."

One helping the other, they were soon over the wall and rapidly searching the alley outside.

"Peter," ordered Danny, "come here quickly."

They passed silently out by swinging aside the loose plank, and, keeping in the shadows as they crossed the yard, reentered through the open window. Very quietly Danny turned the key in the door leading to the corridor, and peeped out. He saw the jailer coming quietly toward him and silently admitted him.

"They are gone," he told the jailer. "The thing to do is to let me take this prisoner and keep him over night, for that crowd will be back. Slip off his handcuffs so that we can get away unsuspected. You heard the sheriff swear me in as deputy, didn't you? Quick! Don't hesitate!"

"How about your clothes?" asked the jailer as he released Peter's manacled wrists. "Anybody would recognize you in that outfit."

"I'll have to take the chance. We'll slip down to

Riney Run and go along the creek till out in the country."

They were passing out the front door now. There was but one person in sight, and he was standing beneath a tree across the street. When Danny and his charge had gone about ten steps from the door, the figure started toward them. Peter attempted to break and run. Danny realized that to do so would be futile. He slowed his pace, and their pursuer joined them.

"Where are you going, Governor, with that nigger? Birds of a feather, eh?"

Danny recognized Johnson. He had an overmastering desire and impulse to try how hard he could knock Johnson sprawling. A swinging blow to the lower jaw or to the tip of the chin, he recalled, would do the work. Without a word Danny drew himself taut into position, and then, putting every ounce of energy in his body behind the blow, swung his fist to Johnson's jaw. Johnson dropped like a log, and lay where he fell.

"By George, that is a good punch for an emergency," remarked Danny to himself.

"Come on, Peter."

But another figure came up now, advancing along the sidewalk from the direction of the jail, and Danny, to his great pleasure recognized Philip Armstrong. Their greeting was cordial but hasty, and they quickly arranged for Philip to take the negro boy in charge and for Danny to remain behind a moment to make sure that Johnson was not seriously hurt before leaving him, and then to meet at the bridge on the Riney Run pike, Philip to take the creek route with his charge and Danny to follow out the road.

It turned out, fortunately, that Johnson was not

dangerously injured,—indeed, he was able after a few moments to walk away alone and to make Danny some pretty promises of revenge, to which Danny gave the attention they merited.

As it turned out, neither Danny nor Philip met a single soul on their way from town to the bridge.

“Well, Danny,” said Philip when they met, “tell us all about it.”

“No,” refused Danny, “tell me first what you and that bunch of Peter’s friends did.”

“Well, you heard the firing, did you? That is all we did. When we left the jail, we could see that fire starting. I don’t know what caused the fire, but I thought that would be the place to stir up some excitement as a counter attraction. We went back into an alley not more than half a square from the fire, and, when the crowd had gathered pretty well, I told the negroes to fire their pistols into the air, and then to scatter out and to gather again at the intersection of two alleys in another direction from the burning stable. Then they fired off another volley or two and separated again. There were lots of town negroes at the fire, and no one could tell Peter’s bunch from the others, especially as I told them to keep near, but not close, together.”

Danny did not tell Philip the particulars of the events in which he had been closely concerned. He informed him only that he was now a deputy sheriff with the custodianship of Peter, and of his plan to return him to the sheriff on the train next morning, or to take him to the city for safe-keeping. Philip might telephone the sheriff from the house very early next morning to ascertain whether or not the jailer had got the arrange-

ment through. And so it was that Philip returned late, contrary to his promise to Willie Pat, and so it was that Danny was again peacefully asleep in his chair and in the room from which he had been taken only a few hours before.

CHAPTER VIII

SIMKINS BECOMES A HERO

THE grey of dawn was stealing into the cabin as Danny opened his eyes. Not for a moment or two could he realize his situation and account for the stiffness and soreness of his muscles and for the chilliness which had crept in from the fog-filled hollow. But the aches of his joints and the chill of the atmosphere served to arouse him, and the recollection of his responsibility for the prisoner in the loft brought him quickly to his feet, wide awake. He stretched himself to his full height, extended his arms, struck his fists upon his chest, and then mounted the ladder to discover whether Peter were still there and safe. The negro lay sound asleep upon the corn husks, and was snoring comfortably. Danny recalled his first sight of Philip Armstrong. Never would he forget his strange meeting with his new friend. Philip would arrive soon. Danny would have his breakfast ready. He descended without awakening Peter, took out his kit and soon had filled the cabin with the pleasant aroma of coffee and frying bacon. This aroma must have penetrated to the loft also.

"U-u-um-umph," he caught the sound of Peter's voice, "I sho' can't stay asleep no longer now. I certainly does love to sleep, dat's right, but—say, Mistah Danny, what you doin' down dere?"

At the moment, Philip stepped to the door.

"You're up early, old man, and doing good work, too, eh?" he remarked as he entered and deposited a bundle upon the table. "I found some cold biscuits out in the kitchen, and brought them along."

"I think we had better start out as early as we possibly can," returned Danny. "Are you ready for some of this coffee? Pull up your chair."

"Sit down yourself, we'll let that negro wait on us. Peter, come down here and wait on table."

Peter's task of serving was light and soon enough despatched. To the more serious duty of consuming everything left after the breakfast of his two guards, Peter devoted greater energy, and would willingly have devoted more time if his white friends had been willing to allow it.

As they strode up the path along the creek, Danny's eyes turned involuntarily toward the big house, standing silent in the cool light of dawn. No single sign of life was here visible; no smoke curled from the kitchen chimney, not a single shutter was open. Asleep, no doubt, the fair occupant. Danny thought with depression, if not with some bitterness, of how little he mattered to her. He was again going away into trouble, although not, of course, into danger, and she cared not enough to send him a word or to give him a wave of her hand as he passed. The low singing of the clear water beside him, the white fingers of morning touching the hilltops to the right and to the left of him, the dewy freshness of the air, sweet with honeysuckle and locust blossoms, the full-throated call of the robin and the clearer call of the bobwhite, all affected him only dully. In his mind and in his heart were but depression

and painful emptiness where fair, indefinite hope had been. There was a dash of bitterness also. The girl that cared nothing for him did not care, probably, for anyone. She was one of these, no doubt, who are satisfied and pleased so long as they enjoy their own comfort and gratify their own wishes.

"Danny Lacey, you're a low-minded, cowardly scamp," was Danny's startled reply to these, his own thoughts. "Miss Willie Pat is *all right*; and you are the snivelling whelp that deserves contempt. Why should she care for you? Be satisfied with what favor or friendship she has shown you, and be proud of it."

"That's what I'll do," was Danny's unconsciously spoken reply to this self-given advice. "I'll be satisfied, and proud of her favor, however small; but I'm going to try like the devil to make that favor grow,—to make that favor grow for *you*, Danny Lacey."

"Suh?" queried Peter.

"What did you say?" inquired Philip.

"I say, let's get along. It would be well to be at the station before anyone is stirring."

At this moment Willie Pat lost sight of them, for Willie Pat was gazing at the little party, and at one of the party in particular, through her window shutter. And it is true that her eye clouded as with pain at the sight of Danny striding on without turning his head, although Philip, who walked behind, gave a long look and a wave of his hand as though he believed she might be on the outlook for them. Willie Pat turned from the window with a sigh. Her sleep had been short, and, if the truth were known, this loss of sleep might account for her depression better even than could Dan-

ny's averted head. And who knows but that Danny's low state of feeling came from spending a night in a chair as much as from the silence and the closed window shutters of Miss Willie Pat's home? However that may be, neither of these two young people was so spiritless as to give way to glooms without a struggle, and they both had much on their side, this glorious morning in June. It was early for Willie Pat to be up, but it was, she thought, too late to return to her slumbers; so she dressed herself quickly, said her morning prayers and went down to the porch. The air was like nectar and ambrosia. The long, cool shadow of the oaks, just down the slope, splotched the cool lawn in front, and shielded the dew-weighted roses in the garden from the level sunbeams. Defying the wet grass, Willie Pat went out into the garden, and soon had her arms full of the sweetest and most perfect blooms.

While arranging these, she sat upon a rustic bench screened by a trellised honeysuckle, and charming indeed was the picture she made in this lovely and secluded spot. But fairer and sweeter still were the thoughts,—or shall we call them dreams?—that occupied her mind. The glory of the morning held her spellbound. Back to her now came her sweetest memories: idyllic days at Sharon, the low-voiced nuns, the flower-bordered walks, the orderliness, the peace, the quiet, the happy companionship; the chiming of the convent bells, the long walks in the autumn fields, the vesper service, the happy visits from her father. Her father would soon be home now, much improved. How she would welcome him! That dearest of daddies, how kind he had always been to her. For the little girl was

a woman now, and knew. She knew now how lonely that strong daddy was when he took her to Sharon and how even lonelier he was when he went home without her. For mother had left her in the summer, and in September he had taken her to the Academy. That was five years ago; a child of fourteen then, a young woman of nineteen now. Oh, yes, she understood better now; and every day and every night and always she would care for that silent daddy that loved her and missed her mother so. What would father think of Danny? Would he like him as Philip did? Of course he would; everybody liked Danny. But father might not wish her to like him. He would not understand. It was so short a time; Danny had not been here a week yet, think of it! And she had brought him here while both Philip and her father were away. No redder were the roses now than Willie Pat's cheeks!

"But I did not bring him here; he came himself. I only hired him when he answered my advertisement and I had no idea then that I should feel,—that I should,—that he would,—that things would be as they are."

Willie Pat stood up and, with a little fret, moved down along the path. This helped her to a wider view of the garden and to a wider view of her affairs. Her strong common sense served her well as usual, and she reflected, as she prepared to leave the garden:

"Nevertheless, Danny did come while father and Philip were away, and I must be very careful not to let them think,—not even to think myself,—that I like him. Well, I do like him, but that is all, and more, likely, than he can say of me. He certainly went away this morning giving me no thought, while I was goose

enough to watch him through the window shutter when I might better have been asleep. Well, helping Aunt Millie put up those cherries will keep Mr. Danny out of my mind today. Maybe when he comes back he will have lots of interesting things to tell me."

Danny, meanwhile, was rapidly clearing up his own badly muddled affairs. After he and Philip, with Peter in custody, had reached Bates' Bluff, the first little railway station beyond the town, he had not long to wait. They flagged the train, although it was already slowing down, and, as it drew nearer, they saw the sheriff leaning out a window on the outlook for them. Danny was relieved at this escape from an unpleasant trip to the city, and, after putting Peter aboard the train, he and Philip walked back to Dunsboro, two miles away, along the little railroad. The inhabitants were just beginning to stir as they arrived in town, so Philip lost no time in going to Colonel Mitre's home to ask him to go with them and secure Danny a speedy trial. The Colonel invited them in and insisted that they breakfast with him. After breakfast, Danny found himself seated comfortably with the Colonel on the spacious front porch, and giving him the details of his adventure the night before. The Colonel was not at all surprised at his denial of any knowledge as to who it was that had fired at Johnson, and he laughed so heartily at Danny's description of himself posing as Governor of the State that Philip looked from the parlor window to inquire what was going on. Danny seized the opportunity to urge Philip to be about their business, and in a few moments Katherine and he joined the group on the porch.

"All right, young man," the Colonel assented, "we'll

be off; and, if we find the judge in his office, we'll have you and the law disentangled in time for you to reach home and put in a good day's work in your tobacco. As Governor of the State, you owe it to the people to set a good example in attending carefully, scientifically, and diligently to your crop. Come, now, let's be going."

The Judge shook hands cordially with the Colonel and Philip when they reached the courthouse, and received the introduction of Danny with pleasant, old-fashioned courtesy.

"So this is the Governor!" he said after a moment when all were seated, and glancing at Danny with a look of keen interest and amusement. "The Governor arrived just in time to save that nigger, Colonel, and to save this town and county a heap of trouble. Is there anything this court can do for Mr. Lacey?"

"Yes, there is, Judge," replied the Colonel promptly. "Mr. Lacey was arrested and put in jail last night, through some mistake, I am sure. I do not know the nature of the charge made against him, but I am certain there is some mistake, and this is what we are here for now,—to see whether the misunderstanding cannot be straightened out without further trouble and annoyance to a young gentleman who should not be subjected to such embarrassment."

"On what charge did the sheriff arrest you?" inquired the Judge, turning to Danny.

"On a charge of 'shooting at and wounding.' "

"Who swore out the warrant?"

"A resident of Dunsboro, named Johnson."

"Bill Johnson?"

"Yes, sir; Bill Johnson."

"Would you object if I should have Johnson come

here now? If we find the error that has been made we can not only let you go now but can render unnecessary any trial later on."

"That's fine of you, Judge," declared Danny heartily. "Have Johnson here and have the thing over. I am anxious to get back to my work."

The Judge took up the receiver and soon had Johnson's rooms.

"Well, I declare," he reported in a few minutes as he hung up, "Johnson is not at home. Mrs. Tarcott says he did not come in last night."

Only Danny and Philip seemed deeply interested in this information. The Colonel, indeed, brushed it aside with the somewhat urgent suggestion that Johnson's absence should not necessarily delay Danny's release. To this the Judge assented, making it known, of course, that, should the case come up, he would expect Danny to be on hand. Within a few minutes, therefore, Danny and Philip, having thanked the Judge and the Colonel most cordially and bidden them good morning, were walking out the pike toward home. That they talked of Johnson is not surprising. Were it not for Johnson, they would not have had the strange experiences of the night before,—experiences from which surprising consequences might yet follow. They had thwarted a mob and saved a life, it is true; but they had also technically speaking, broken the law themselves,—Danny, by breaking jail and by assaulting Johnson, and Philip, by aiding and abetting him in these enterprises. Were it not for Johnson, both would now be at work in the fields where work was sorely needed. Were it not for Johnson, neither of them would have an enemy in the world, and well enough both knew that Johnson was

both a bitter and a dangerous enemy. As they walked along, they spoke of these things—and of many others; but not a word of the redoubtable Simkins. How completely, in the various excitements, they had forgotten Simkins! And yet Simkins was acting so strangely at the moment that, could they but see him, they could think of nothing else. What was Simkins doing? Let us follow the rascal from his awakening in the implement shed to the thick undergrowth in the woods, through which he is now wriggling, snakelike, cautious, silent.

Well, then, on opening his eyes, Simkins took one gaze around, and then broke the silence:

“H—l fire! I’m thirstier than h—l!”

With that, he got up. He did not stretch himself nor rub his limbs after sleeping on the hard floor, nor the back of his head after his hard drinking. He was probably inured both to hard beds and hard drinks. But he did want water, and he moved directly toward the big spring under the bluff near the road. Unseen of Willie Pat, he caught a glimpse of her in the garden; and, though he did not stop, he caught a whiff of Aunt Millie’s coffee as he passed not far from the kitchen door. Water he wanted and, as the gurgling splash of the spring came to his ears, he hastened his steps and eagerly drank his fill. Then he remembered the coffee. At the kitchen door he was given steaming hot coffee and biscuits straight from the oven, but accompanied by a peremptory order to go straight to the spring for water. The trolley line was out of order, and she “wasn’t gwine climb down dat hill fo’ nobody to git water, ’specially whin dey wuz a no-account white man hangin’ ’round to send fo’ it.”

Simkins did not care. He took up his bucket and started out. Just before beginning the descent, he stopped dead still in his tracks. Then he moved obliquely, and stood behind some bushes, commanding from his outlook a view of the road. He set down his bucket. A moment later he crouched down and drew back. In another, he advanced again, his eyes all the time upon the road, but now turning slowly to the right.

"He won't see me, d—n him, not ef I can he'p it. As soon as he gits th'ough the gate, I'll go down after the water."

When the sound of the gate slamming to was heard, Simkins descended quickly to the spring, filled his bucket, and returned over the same path to the kitchen. Meanwhile, Johnson,—for that is whom he was watching,—proceeded up the avenue. Why was Johnson here at so early an hour? What welcome could he expect from Philip Armstrong? Was it the burning for revenge against Danny Lacey, revenge so hot that it could not wait for a more suitable time and a more suitable place? Or could it possibly be that he was driven by his obsession for the fair mistress of this house? See! He steps upon the porch; now he hesitates,—and now he pulls the knob which would ring the door bell. In answer to his call is no one coming? He will probably ring again. Surely he will ring again. But, no; he turns and, tip-toeing down the steps, moves swiftly over the lawn, crosses the fence into the west woodland, and disappears from view. Indeed, as neither Willie Pat, who was in the garden, nor Aunt Millie, who was busy in the kitchen, had heard the door bell, his strange visit would have been quite unknown to anyone, were it not for Simkins. This worthy had managed very easily to

return from the spring unseen by Johnson, and then to conceal himself on the woodland side of the fence, whence he could command a view of the front door and of any approach to it. And so, from Johnson's actions, he got his fill of mystification. This he expressed by a whispered conviction that eternal torments awaited him surely by will of the Supreme Being, and that his immediate ancestry was far from being pre-eminently respectable. But now Johnson was coming toward the woodland, and fear drove wonder from Simkins' mind. Should he run? Or should he stand up and show himself? Characteristically he did neither. He waited, crouching somewhat lower. Johnson climbed over the fence not ten yards away, and, without looking to the right or to the left, plunged into the leafy depths of the woods. Simkins' convictions as to what awaited him in the next world were now vehement, but for the immediate present his curiosity regarding Johnson made strongest demand upon his action. He followed cautiously into the woodland.

How shall we account for Johnson's strange visit? We cannot, surely. Let Johnson's own state of mind and conflicting passions account for it. He hated Philip Armstrong, as we hate most the thing we have wronged; but, be his affection as selfish as it might, he loved Philip's sister. There we have love and hate. But Johnson was driven about by other strong passions. What of Danny Lacey? Danny Lacey had thwarted his plans; had come out of his escapade honored rather than disgraced; had struck him, *Bill Johnson*, in the face with contemptuous silence, and had left him lying on the public street, to be discovered, before he could get away, by two young 'bloods,' who would be

sure to publish his discomfiture at once. The very recollection blinded him again with rage as he wandered through the woods. There was revenge. But what is that feeling, which is not hatred and is not revenge, that we have for a rival in love? Is it respect, or is it fascination? To a lover, the most interesting thing in the world, coming after the object of his worship, is this rival worshipper. Add to all these conflicting but powerful emotions the fact that Johnson had spent a night without sleep or rest; first wandering about the streets, then gambling with a rather low crowd till dawn, and drinking fiery whiskey the latter part of the night, and then, if we do not understand, at least we do not wonder at, his alternate rage and hesitation. Just now he is hesitating. He had neared the edge of the woods where they skirt the pike, about half a mile toward town from the big spring, and he slows his pace as though not ready yet to come out into the open, to meet his fellow man and the simple, ordinary affairs of everyday life. He sits down, and nervously rolls and lights a cigarette.

Though not a dozen yards above the road, Johnson's resting place was near the edge of a cliff at whose foot the turnpike ran; and, as his station was just opposite a turn, he could see along the road toward town, perhaps a quarter of a mile. What he actually saw was Danny and Philip returning. Had he not sat down and lighted his cigarette, he would now have met the two in the broad sunlight on the open pike. As it was, he saw them, and remained himself unseen. We cannot read his mind; he may not have intended murder,—he probably did not. Nevertheless, he slowly drew his revolver from his pocket, and stared with a long and

evil look at the two friends approaching. Slowly and carefully he aimed. His aim follows their motion. Is he merely fancying how easily the thing can be done, or is he really going to fire? We may never know. Simkins, who, aided by the cigarette fumes, had traced him to the spot, and who, as he saw Philip and Danny approaching under cover of Johnson's gun, crept noiselessly up behind Johnson, now screamed: "Don't shoot," and rushed upon Johnson to strike the gun from his hand with an oaken club. Whether Johnson, on turning, fired in fancied self-defense, or whether Simkins' descending club, caused him convulsively to squeeze the trigger, the result was that Danny and Philip, hearing the report of the pistol, looked up to see Johnson's body hurtling down over the cliff and falling into the shallow roadside ditch at their very feet, where it remained, grotesquely spread, and ominously motionless.

CHAPTER IX

MEET MISS FANCY BOWLDER

AT the sudden cry of "Don't shoot!" from the unseen Simkins, Philip and Danny halted in surprise, surprise not lessened by their seeing the body of Johnson hurtling down over the cliff, and then lying suddenly moveless in the roadside ditch. Then came the easy-gliding Simkins, passing down from sapling to sapling until he reached the road. In Simkins' hand was a still smoking revolver.

"He was going to kill you two fellers," announced Simkins, "but I was too quick for him. You'd a' been dead men sure only for me. If you're both alive, you owe it to me."

Then, "My God, is he dead?"

All three stared in horror and awe at the grotesquely sprawling body lying so strangely still in the ditch. It was a novel sight to Danny, who said:

"He is dead."

Philip, who had seen in France those sights which seem to have sealed the lips of the boys who went abroad, only replied:

"Come; let us lift him out of the ditch and lay him on the grass."

Not a groan, not a breath escaped from Johnson as they raised his body and laid it in a clean and shady spot. Philip laid his hand over the heart while the other two looked on, silent and expectant. When Philip slow-

ly removed his hand and placed his ear over Johnson's chest, Danny and Simkins together asked tensely:

"Is he dead?"

"Not yet. His heart is beating, I think. Yes, I am sure," he added in a moment. "Simkins, go down into the ravine quickly, and fetch some water. Leave that gun with me."

A few minutes later Philip ordered Danny to cross the road and urge Simkins to hurry, because he hoped now that a dash of water might revive Johnson, although as yet there was no breathing perceptible. Danny crossed the road, but, when he looked down into the ravine, no sight of Simkins was to be had.

"Get the water yourself," ordered Philip, "the rascal has run away."

Danny came quickly with his hat filled with water from the cool runlet in the ravine, and Philip dashed the water repeatedly into Johnson's face. So far as he could observe there was no reaction. Gravely, then, he turned to Danny, and said:

"We shall have to hurry. You go as quickly as you can, and come back with Bob and the surrey; we shall have to take him home. Tell Willie Pat to call the doctor at once. I'll remain here with him. Don't go around by the gate; cut right through the woods. You can be there in three minutes."

Danny hurried off and, retracing through the woods almost exactly the way taken earlier by the unfortunate Johnson and the runaway Simkins, soon entered the house and called, with all the composure he could muster, for Miss Willie Pat. She came in from the kitchen, and her cheeks, at the sight of Danny, seemed to bor-

row something of the color of the cherries she had been engaged in canning.

"Miss Willie Pat," announced Danny unsmilingly and without introduction, "Mr. Johnson has been hurt out on the pike, and Philip has sent me for the surrey to bring him here; and he wants you to call Dr. Coakley and tell him to come out at once."

"Indeed!" replied Miss Willie Pat, "it seems as though the sea *I* sail is *not* uncharted, since I have a brother to give me orders and a Mr. Lacey to hand them on to me. Is Mr. Johnson hurt badly?"

"Very badly, we're afraid," replied Danny, mystified at Miss Willie Pat's words and manner, but determined and clear upon carrying out Philip's wishes. "You'll call the doctor at once, won't you, Miss Willie Pat? I must go and put Bob in the surrey. Philip is depending upon me."

"Oh, has every other hope departed? Well, go and get Bob, and I'll call Dr. Coakley, though I don't see why Philip does not have Mr. Johnson taken to his home in town. Still, I'll do as you say. And hurry. Didn't you say that Mr. Johnson is hurt badly?"

"That girl would puzzle Aristotle himself," muttered Danny as he hurried to the barn. Even as he threw the harness over Bob's back, hooked up the backing straps and fastened the traces, it was her picture and not Johnson's that was in his mind, her words and not Philip's urgent request to hurry that were in his ears. "Every other hope's departed," and, "The sea I sail's uncharted"—what could that tantalizing girl mean? Then it came to him,—his silly lines written down by the big spring the morning he came first to the Armstrongs. There could be no doubt of it! She knew

them. Why, she had mocked him with them before! She had used these very words! And what was it she had said to him that evening when, in his pride, he made the request to have his meals sent to him at the cabin?—"Now from all you must dissever?" He jumped into the surrey, and drove furiously down the avenue. He would show her he was no fool! But now he had to stop to open the gate, and again to close the gate; and, as he started up the pike, the seriousness of his mission came back to him. Johnson might now be dead. Philip was certainly anxious. He must drive fast. As he sped up the pike, he said to himself:

"Yes, I am a fool. No one but a fool would be flustered about what a girl thinks or says when a man may be dying. No one but a fool would ever have written down such hopeless rot!"

But now Philip was in sight, and, Danny perceived, as he drew rapidly nearer, had not, apparently, changed his position since he had left him with the prostrate Johnson. At the sound of the approaching vehicle, Philip looked up but did not stand. Nor did he speak a word as Danny brought Bob to a halt and got out.

"He is just the same," then said Philip quietly. "Help me lift him into the back seat."

Again they raised the prostrate form and again their hopes of hearing a groan or of detecting some sign of life were disappointed. Danny turned the carriage around and drove carefully down the pike with Philip in the rear seat holding Johnson in as comfortable a position as he could. A few minutes later they had carried him up the stairs and placed him in bed. Dr. Coakley, tall, grey-bearded, with large, intelligent eyes

and a very quiet manner, was an old and intimate friend of the Armstrongs, and had attended both to Philip and Willie Pat in infancy and in all the round of measles, whooping cough and croup which go with a happy childhood. His very presence lent assurance in time of trouble. But, after examining Johnson carefully, he appeared very grave, and said only:

"He must not be removed. You will have to do the best you can with him. I shall try to secure a trained nurse from the city. May I see Miss Willie Pat?"

He spoke to Philip, who, with Danny, had remained in the room and, with the aid of Aunt Millie, had assisted the physician in making Johnson clean and comfortable.

Willie Pat received the doctor in the parlor and, having heard from him his opinion of Johnson's case, assented promptly:

"There is nothing else for us to do, doctor. We will do the best we can for him. If you can procure the services of a nurse, that of course will be much better. We should not think, certainly, of removing him against your orders. But what is it that has happened to him?"

"He fell over the cliff, for one thing, since Philip and that young man both saw him falling. His right shoulder is dislocated, and he may be injured internally; but the thing most to fear is concussion of the brain. He has a bad wound in the back of his head which may possibly have come from striking his head when he fell. However it came, it is this blow upon the head that has produced the more serious danger. He may recover consciousness today, or it may be several days,—or he may never recover."

"That is terrible."

"Yes, it is serious. But," reassuringly and with a kindly look in his fine old eyes, "who knows but that he will be better in a few days? We physicians have many such agreeable surprises, thank God."

It was now nearly noon. Philip remained in attendance upon Johnson, Willie Pat and Aunt Millie busied themselves with finishing their canning, and Danny went to start cultivating the lower tobacco patch. As he drove his team up and down the long rows, his mind kept running over the thousand things that had occurred since his coming to the farm. What a contrast with his life at home and what a contrast with his life at Notre Dame! The excitement and sleeplessness of the night before, the long, early morning walk and the sudden Johnson episode may have made our Danny more nervous than usual, but, whatever the cause, the recent months of his life seemed to him now, as they passed in review before him as he sat on his cultivator in this sunny, quiet field, like some wild, disordered dream. Just one year before, his father had died suddenly, and Danny, on the eve of graduation, had hastened home from the university to be with his widowed mother in their hour of common sorrow. His course in Arts and Letters, just finished, was to have been only a foundation for a thorough course in law, and he was then to have joined his father in a practice that had become too heavy for himself alone and too valuable to be shared with any but an only son. Now his father's death found Danny unprepared to take up this practice. So, with the sorrowful concurrence of his broken-hearted mother, he had returned to Notre Dame, intending to give one year to the study of the law, and

then to take his chance with the bar examination in some state where his passing would be at least a possibility. Toward the end of this year, overwork brought on a breakdown, and his return home. Here sorrow again struck hard, for within a month of his return, his mother also passed away, and Danny was left alone.

"Go to some quiet place," his physician had said to him. "Go to the country and work on a farm."

Following this advice, Danny had come down to Dunsboro. Why he came to this region in preference to others, one might not know. It was not really by positive preference. He knew no one hereabouts. Dunsboro was an historic town, it is true, and that may have appealed to him; also Dunsboro had once been the home of great lawyers, of men whose learning was preserved in authoritative and valuable books, and, moreover, in this state it was still possible to be admitted to the bar on merit solely; and Danny had thought, wisely enough it seemed at the time, that he would have many quiet hours between work on the farm, hours which he could devote to fuller reading of the law. As this thought came back to him now, he laughed out so gayly and so heartily that his team was startled. Those *quiet* hours! He had scarcely had one since he had come to the place. From the moment that he had first met that disconcerting Miss Willie Pat until he hitched up this very team he was driving, most of his nights as well as his days had been without rest or quiet. He looked toward the house sitting high and still among its oaks.

"It looks like the very haven and home of peace and quiet," he murmured, "but some evil genius seems to drive peace and quiet away. And that girl may be the

genius, too. I've been a fool. I'll keep away from her. If she wants to disturb someone, it can be someone else."

And then his mind went back to the days of old Notre Dame. Was ever such a brotherhood as that of the fellows that lived as one big family in the clustered halls beneath the Golden Dome! Where else were the freshmen received with such genuine and simple kindness! Where else the seniors and the monogram men at once so sociable and so self-effacing! Where else in the big school world could be found so generous a sharing of a fellow's joys and sorrows and scanty cash! And oh, those 'N. D.' football teams! And oh, the roaring, loyal support from the 'bleachers' drowning out the treble cheers of the 'minims'! And then the quiet evenings, the sun going down behind the western woods and lakes, placid and clear, and holding in their hearts the sky, the encircling groves and dome and spire and ivy-covered wall! Then the sweet chimes of St. Mary's, a mile away, mellow as the dusk and compelling in their romantic sweetness. The lights then appearing in a thousand windows, and the slow withdrawal to one's private study. How enchanting it would be to show Willie Pat about enchanting old Notre Dame!

With a jerk that startled his tired mules, Danny sat erect.

"Again," he ejaculated, somewhat harshly. "*This* 'N. D.' man must be getting softening of the brain. I'll try now to do some cultivating of tobacco and keep my mind on it. Perhaps," bitterly, "I can hold out for an hour."

About an hour later, as Danny, having put up and fed his team, was passing near the house on his way to the cabin, Aunt Millie called to him and, as she drew near, said:

"Mistah Danny, Miss Willie Pat says would you go to town an' meet de train an' bring de nurse back. She says you kin drive in, or if you aint too tired you might rather walk in an' 'en come out in de car, 'case its done finished now. She says do whichever you wish. We aint gwine have supper till after you all git back."

"All right," replied Danny and went on to the cabin, where he made his toilet carefully, considering all the while whether he should make the trip in the carriage or walk in and then return in the automobile. He decided to drive both ways as the evening was warm and, after a two-mile walk, he would reach town hot and tired and perhaps covered with dust. On the other hand, it might be that Miss Willie Pat wanted the car back, and it was in his power to accommodate her. But why should he go out of his way to accommodate her? If she wanted the car back, why should she not have said so to him? No; she left him free to make his choice. He would drive both ways. As there was little time left, he started at the earliest possible moment. While waiting on the platform for the arrival of the train, he amused himself watching the crowd, most of whom, apparently, had come merely to see and be seen. He feared that this crowd would render it difficult for him when the train arrived to single out the nurse. He therefore followed the hotel men and delivery men as they all drew together at the sound of the whistle, so as to be in a position to see every passenger that got off.

The first few to dismount waved their hands from

the platform and were greeted by little groups of expectant friends. Then came a young woman, blonde, confident, flashing, highly dressed, whom Danny pronounced an actress; then half a dozen middle-aged townspeople, and, to Danny's surprise, that was all. Danny looked toward the farther end of the coach, but saw none descending there. He moved up toward the front of the train, but the next car was for mail and baggage only. By this time the crowd was rapidly thinning out, so Danny anxiously passed around to the carriage way, where he walked rapidly about, alertly inspecting the departing passengers. He saw no one whom he could believe the nurse from the city, and he was about to give up his search in chagrin when he overheard a taxi driver saying:

"Yes, ma'am, it will cost you two dollars to be taken out to the Armstrong place."

Danny turned his gaze quickly and discovered the "actress" about to step into the carriage.

"Pardon me," he interposed, advancing quickly, "but I am looking for a passenger, a trained nurse, who is expected at the Armstrongs. I have been sent to meet her."

"How lovely!" returned the "actress" gushingly, while the taxi driver grinned. "So you have come to meet me. And, say, you don't look a bit as though you live in the country."

"I have not been out of the field two hours," replied Danny in an even tone, for he did not fancy the "actress" greatly on his first acquaintance, and he did like his lately acquired friends, and saw nothing disparaging in their being "from the country." "Our carriage is down this way. Have you any baggage?"

The taxi driver handed over a valise. This Danny placed in the rear seat, and offered to assist the nurse to her place beside it, but she drew back and declared:

"Oh, no, I am going to ride in front with the driver."

"Bully for you," responded Danny, with less coolness in his tone; "I'm all in luck this time."

"Yes, indeed, you are; now show me how to drive horses."

"Just watch," replied Danny, as he whirled the team around the corner and down the main street of Dunsboro. The street was nearly deserted, and even Danny and his new companion had soon left it behind and were making good time out the winding pike.

"How far is it to the Armstrongs, Mr.— oh, I don't know your name!"

"Lacey is my name," Danny informed her; "what is yours?"

"My name is Bowlder, Fancy Bowlder; do you like it?"

"Wouldn't change it for anything," declared Danny. Miss Bowlder giggled prettily, and ejaculated:

"My! Isn't this a wild place!"

The turn just made had opened to them a vista of a deepening and widening gorge, with lofty hills ahead, wooded, and appearing higher than they really were because viewed from an altitude opposite.

"Here is the cliff your patient fell over this morning," said Danny, pointing to the right.

"My goodness! It is a wonder he was not killed."

"Maybe he has been, for all we know."

Miss Bowlder giggled again.

"Isn't it wonderful?" she asked.

"Isn't what wonderful?"

"All this; these hills, these trees, this rough road. Oh, and there is a wonderful spring! Can't you get me a drink?"

"Yes," replied Danny, "I can; but we shall be at the house in a moment, and we can get a drink there more easily. Besides, we should not keep them all waiting, and especially Mr. Johnson, who is in a really critical condition. There is where I live," he added, as they approached the gate and as the cabin came into view.

Danny left Miss Boulder with Miss Willie Pat on the front porch, and drove on to the barn. Frequently, when alone he expressed himself aloud. He did so now, emphatically, though all he said was, "Phew!"

CHAPTER X

WILD HONEY

“**W**HERE is the nurse?” inquired Philip as he sat down at the supper table.

“She is upstairs,” replied his sister; “I did not want her with us.”

Philip was about to inquire facetiously whether she thought the nurse was a “good looker,” but a glance at Willie Pat’s tired face turned his thought completely. Philip was very proud of his sister, and he loved her tenderly; and his self-reproach, although silent, had been long and bitter for the sorrow and anxiety he had given her and for the heavy burden of responsibility his absence from home had laid upon her young shoulders since their father’s illness. So he spoke no further of the nurse; but, instead, began to plan rapidly in his own mind something that might be of immediate pleasure and diversion for Willie Pat; and, when, after a few moments of silence, he was ready to speak, he said:

“Willie Pat, I wish you would go out to Aunt Mahala’s and get some wild honey. I haven’t had any since I left home, and with these biscuits— — —”

“These biscuits could not be any better if they were swimming in wild honey,” interrupted Danny.

“You’ve never had any of Aunt Mahala’s,” retorted Philip. “She lives in an old log house just this side of Bohun’s Knob, right in the woods, you might say; and

that dark wild honey of hers has an aroma like that of all the flowers on the mountain side. She is a great friend of Willie Pat's. She thinks Willie Pat, as they say out in that country, 'made the moon and hung it.' Couldn't you go tomorrow, Sis?"

"Surely not tomorrow, Philip. The nurse is here, and Mr. Johnson in the condition you know. And besides, I have no one to go with me. It is too late to ask Katherine, and you cannot spare the time right now, can you?"

"Yes, I can spare the time easily enough; but it will be better for Mr. Lacey to take you and for me to remain on the place. Johnson will be all right soon. Just before I came down, he opened his eyes, and I could see that he recognized me. Aunt Millie can take care of the nurse. And then I have a good hand to help finish up the tobacco while Danny is gone."

"A good hand?" repeated Willie Pat.

"Yes. Have you forgotten the invaluable Simkins?"

"Is he back?" asked Danny in astonishment. "I thought he would be afraid."

"Not a bit," returned Philip; "he feels quite safe,—I might say, quite important. You see, he claims to have saved your life and mine from Johnson, and to have saved Johnson from himself,—from becoming a criminal by shooting us. He saved him, it is true, by striking him on the head with a club."

"Well," added Danny, "I should be delighted to accompany Miss Willie Pat."

"I'll think it over," vouchsafed that young lady, "and see."

But next morning, when the golden sun, after sprinkling the hilltops and flooding the fields and drenching

the woods with his light, was now rising up so as to peep down even into the misty valleys, a lone buggy, drawn by a single black horse, stood motionless in the pike where this swung round the brow of a hill and led suddenly upon the view of a deep and wide valley beneath; and in the moveless buggy sat our two young friends. Blue hills beyond, green valley below, the river glinting through the trees that marked its sinuous course through the fertile lowland. At their left, a gorge, choked with evergreens, opened romantically out into the river valley. The scent of the evergreens, of wild honeysuckle and of locust blossoms filled the air; the mocking bird's rapturous song floated to them from across the valley, up from which came a watchdog's barking and the happy strain of a woman's song. Like a checkerboard embroidered was the floor of the valley, its fields of varied colors being the squares, and the strips of woodland, the orchards, and the winding streamways being the embroideries. Danny was oppressed with the sheer beauty of it all. Softly he spoke something to Willie Pat, but she gazed on in silence. Minutes passed, and still she sat as one entranced. Danny very quietly and gently touched the horse's flank with the whip lash, and the buggy moved slowly on. Downward it moved to the valley, the hill ever rising upon the right, the valley floor ever nearer upon the left. Winding and descending, winding and descending with new vistas at every turn, with the shapes,—yes, with the very color,—of the hills changing with their descent, they at length came down upon the comparatively level stretch of turnpike that led to the covered bridge across the river. Only then Willie Pat spoke and it was as one in a dream.

“It was beautiful.”

And now Danny could not make reply for he was intoxicated as with an excess of happiness, new and strange and to him wonderful, and his very heart seemed bent upon choking him. Besides, were he to speak, his voice, he knew, would sound so harsh and his words so crude as to be a disillusionment and a desecration. For Danny was now in a sanctuary, wide as the world, and as wonderful, it is true, but a sanctuary nevertheless; a sanctuary of beauty, down into which in the very sunbeams beamed the smile of God, and in which, worshipping with him, was surely God's fairest creature;—fair of face, yes, but a thousand times fairer of soul. That was the wonder of it to Danny, the beauty of her soul, entranced with the kindred beauty of this wondrous June-world.

And now they came into a little hamlet, in which the level pike, turning to avoid the steep hill again, made a sharp elbow. Past an old brick mansion with a shady lawn and stileblock in front; past the blacksmith's shop and his cottage next door; past the village doctor's home with its flower beds and its swinging sign; past a lazy 'hound-dog' already taking a nap in the shade of a silver poplar with its ever trembling leaves; past a few white hens that scurried reluctantly out of the roadway; past a group of fine-looking, tall, sinewy young fellows with great, drooping straw hats, and 'galluses' over square shoulders, and sun-faded work-clothes that had been up and down many a sunny field,—see the straw hats lifted respectfully because of Miss Willie Pat; past—no, they stop before the cozy little home with its windlass well in front, and they ask a drink, and they receive it from the clean and

comely woman who invites them to rest a while, and who remarks that it looks like rain. There is not a cloud in the sky, yet Willie Pat concurs agreeably in the prognostication, to Danny's amazement; and then they drive on. Now they are out of the village, and Willie Pat directs:

"Turn to the right here."

"Here?" cried Danny in a tone and with a look of surprise. "Up that stony road?"

"It is not so bad," asserted Willie Pat. "We can get over it easily in a buggy. Some parts are smoother, too, and not so rocky. And there are just a few hills, as it follows the creek mostly."

"All right," consented Danny, and he turned off the good pike on to the roughest road he had ever yet been over. But it offered recompense. It lay most of it, in the cool, deep shadow cast by the wooded bluff on their left, a pleasant little stream chattered over its rocky bed on their right; across the stream arose a sunlit cliff crowned with bushes and with higher hills behind it; and up the valley moved little breezes, refreshing, and softer than velvet to the touch. As the road was rough, they drove only at a walk. Surely every circumstance conspired to make this their first real conversation a happy one. For the first time, they were alone together, no one to hear what they might say, no one—on this secluded road—even to see them. And yet they did not tire of the cliff-guarded stream and blue sky above; they did not urge the horse to go faster; they were surprised when, after an hour, coming at length out of the valley to the open upland, they saw the tip of Bohun's Knob rising, rising and growing, rising and

growing more massive, more stately, more impressive every moment they advanced, and Willie Pat announced:

"Well, I declare, we are almost there!"

"Already?" inquired Danny in surprise.

"Yes," replied Willie Pat, flushed with pleasure at Danny's undisguised astonishment, "we have now come fourteen miles."

"I can't believe it," was all that Danny's honest soul could find to say.

"And now we go down, and then we go up, and then we slip to the right into a little road through the bushes, which I will point out to you because you would never see it, and then we pass a watering trough at which Bob can have a drink, and then we turn to the left, and then we are at Aunt Mahala's."

"Indeed and indeed," said Danny, "you are a wonderful guide. Soon we shall see how true a guide. However, truly we are going down. I never before saw such a declivity in a road. And now we are in the creek; from which I judge we have reached the bottom, and now I surmise that yon mass ahead is to be surmounted. Ah, 'tis well; we attack the mountain, not directly but in flank as it were. And how many miles, fair maiden, in this ascent?"

"Perhaps one, not more; and then we have reached our journey's end."

"Then, here is hoping that this one mile prove a long, long mile," ventured Danny as he turned his gaze toward her with his frank and friendly smile.

"Are not all miles of the same length, Mr. Lacey? And, if so, how may you hope that this mile prove a longer one?"

"Mathematicians, Miss Armstrong, and surveyors, and roadbuilders, and perhaps certain other classes may hold that there can be no such thing as long miles and short miles. Since I know better, these people impress me not at all. I have discovered for myself that there are wonderfully short miles. I like them very much better. I hope to meet more of them. I should like to drive over no other kind — — —"

"Wo—o—oh," warned Willie Pat; and then, when Danny and the horse ceased from their respective activities, she laughed most musically. For now, on the right, was an opening in the leafage, into which led a faintly marked roadway. Into this Willie Pat had Danny turn. They went slowly because it was an unimproved way, seldom used, with roots and little gullies making the motion rough, and with twigs and branches slapping the buggy top and at times even the travellers. And now they pause at the watering trough, and, while the horse drinks gratefully of the cool shaded water, Danny inquires:

"Where on earth is the knob?"

"There it is beside you. We are right at its foot. We cannot see it for the woods."

"Sure enough? Are we so close as that?"

"Yes. Can't you trace a little path yonder? See? I think that is the way up. I climbed the knob once."

"I should like to do that," cried Danny eagerly. "Maybe I can do it while you rest with Aunt Mahala."

He reined up the horse and took his seat again, awaiting Willie Pat's reply; but she made none. For suddenly the woods opened; a large farm lay wide-spread before their view and on their right, at the further end of a wide short lane, or avenue, lined on

either side with immense English elms, stood the hospitable-looking home of Aunt Mahala.

While Willie Pat was receiving the warm greeting of her old friend, Danny hitched his horse at the rack. Then he stepped up on the porch and was welcomed by a cordial, self-possessed, matronly woman in a grey dress with white apron, a smiling woman with grey eyes and greying head, a woman whom even life in the backwoods had apparently taught many lessons, and who liked Danny at once,—liked his kind and pleasant smile and his kind and honest eyes. When Danny, at her invitation, took his horse around to the barn, since, as she explained, the men folk were all away, she withdrew with Willie Pat to her large, cool, shaded “parlor.” Here they were still conversing when Danny, having returned from the barn, took a seat upon the edge of the porch floor. As he lit his pipe, he heard the murmur of Willie Pat’s low voice, answered by Aunt Mahala’s cordial assurance:

“Why, of course you can, child; of course it is all right.”

In a moment, Danny heard swift, light footsteps behind him, and, turning, beheld Willie Pat looking at him with a happy smile, as she gave him this command:

“Come on; we are going to climb the knob together.”

* * * * *

Bohun’s Knob is in shape something between a hemisphere and a cone. Perhaps some would describe it as a sugarloaf. Its situation is quite an unusual one. South of it and west of it, five or six miles away, may be seen countless other “knobs,” standing in groups, or running in long chains. But Bohun’s Knob, standing up

alone, is taller than any in the near-by ranges, and this despite the fact that Bohun's base rests in a depression. Were it upon a plateau, it would be a mountain. Two other features of this great knob may be worth noting: it is clothed all over with forest, and in this forest there is no human habitation. All through the winter, the great, shaggy hill sleeps in silence; and rarely, in any season, does human foot climb its steep ascent. Indeed only one way is known by which it can be scaled. This is on the west side and by the faintly traced path pointed out a few moments ago by Willie Pat. Up this path she and Danny are now advancing together. Willie Pat is leading the way and is proceeding rapidly. She knows that their progress farther on must be slow, and she wishes to be back in time for Aunt Mahala's dinner and before Aunt Mahala's prediction of rain is verified.

"I don't think it will rain," declared Danny; "there is not a cloud in the sky."

"Aunt Mahala knows," returned Willie Pat. "And don't you remember that woman at the village said she expects rain, too?"

"It can't rain without clouds," asserted Danny cheerfully.

The dim pathway was gradually growing steeper, but it was leading them out of the denser underbrush and the denser shade on the lower slopes of the knob; for now they could discover that they were following a sort of natural causeway, or ridge, between two ravines, the tree tops in which were already far below them; and, as they ascended, the thinning timber growth permitted them an occasional glimpse of the

sky, in whose deep blue there now floated a few small, fleecy, white clouds.

When they arose after taking their first rest, Willie Pat said to Danny:

"You will have to take the lead now, and will have to help me once in a while."

"Yes, from here on it looks steeper. Well, give me your hand."

In this way they advanced. The ground here was not stony, and so they went ahead without great risk of stumbling or of serious hurt even if they should fall. But the untrodden earth was light and the ascent was steep, and it was almost impossible to advance save by stepping sidewise. This Danny did, with one hand extended forward to balance himself by convenient root, or limb, or sapling, and with the other stretched backward clasping that of Willie Pat, and helping her onward at every upward pace. And now they rested a few moments before making the last and steepest ascent of all. Danny sat upon a jutting stone, while Willie Pat remained standing, and leaned her back against a tree while she looked up, and up, to the rest of the long climb. She had taken off her hat, and a few vagrant strands of her hair played loosely over her moist brow and her rosy cheek. Her grey eyes were bright with the pleasure and the excitement of the adventure. Her delicate, though lithe and symmetrical form, gracefully poised, and flecked over with the light and shadow of that romantic woodland setting, must charm any artist's eye. It must have charmed Danny's. As he looked, a shadow fell upon it, and Danny, casting his eyes upward, saw that a cloud had obscured the sun. Willie

Pat saw it also, and prepared to proceed. And now, although the ascent was steeper and more sinuous, with treacherous bluffs and unexpected declivities to be avoided with care, it did not seem hard at all to Danny because all his thought was for assisting and caring for Willie Pat; and it did not seem hard to Willie Pat because she was filled with the joy of adventure and the sense of novelty and comradeship.

And indeed, Willie Pat's effort had been eased greatly by Danny's solicitous and skillful assistance. So, presently they feel the strain of the ascent easing down, for they are at length on the top with only a gentle easy slope before them leading to the very summit. Reaching this, they found that, owing to the sparseness of the timber-growth, they could see rather well in any direction, and especially well toward the south and east; and, moving on in this direction, they came to the edge of a precipitous declivity where immense masses of rock had fallen away and where no trees, therefore, obstructed the view. To fall from this precipice would have meant terrible and instant death. Here the two sat down to rest, for both were tired; and, after the first charmed exclamations from Willie Pat over the wonderful panorama, they soon fell silent, as well they might. For the scene that unrolled before them was one of grandeur and awe. Billowing woodlands rolled wildly below them and away as far as the eye could see, with only here and there glimpses of what must be open farmlands and the doubtful glint of the little river. And beyond all, as a background for this picture, or as a fortress wall for the world, the beautiful blue front and restful skyline of Margaret's Ridge. Wild, wild indeed was the view, and compass-

ing the landscape of entire counties. So rapt were they in their first wonder and awe and, later, in pointing out to each other some new beauty or some curious object in the varied scene below them, that neither had noticed the rapid gathering of heavy, black clouds behind them in the west until these had come overhead and obscured the sun at the moment the first peal of thunder reached their ears. And now the wind arose, and every glance around convinced them more surely that it would rain, and that very soon, and that of shelter there was no hope whatever.

"If we were foxes, we could keep dry," said Willie Pat whimsically, "for there is a fox's den below us there."

"Can we get to it?" inquired Danny with interest.

"Oh, I should be afraid," protested Willie Pat. "I had much rather get wet."

"Let us take a look at it anyway," urged Danny.

So they walked a short way along the edge of the precipice, until by looking back they could see,—perhaps twenty feet below the summit,—a horizontal crevice, or cave, in the rock, which, Willie Pat said, was known as the fox's den.

"I should dislike to venture down to it even alone," admitted Danny, but in a moment he wished he could have swallowed his tongue before he spoke, for the ominous, swirling clouds were growing terribly black, the fierce lightning blinded them, and the thunder, crashing almost simultaneously, was doubly loud and terrifying in this lofty solitude, and, worst of all, the wind was rising to a tornado under which lithe young trees were beaten to the ground and old ones broken off or uprooted, so that terror stood in Willie Pat's eyes, terror

which melted Danny's heart to pity and drove him to desperate action.

"Come quickly," he urged, taking her hand and leading her down through a cleft in the rock which led to a shelf on the cliff side, and in which they found some shelter from the resistless wind, now rushing with terrific velocity above their heads and carrying with it a rout of dust and leaves and twigs and entire branches. As yet the rain had not fallen; but come it must soon, and with it not only discomfort but a very real danger. The soil, mostly clay, on the shelf at the lower end of the cleft had been washed down from the summit in former rains, and, once the storm broke, it would be perilous to move in that slippery footing. It shook Danny's nerves to think of what must inevitably happen if they should slip, and he determined that the danger must be avoided at once if ever. Speaking, therefore, quietly and in commendably casual tones, Danny instructed Willie Pat to remain seated perfectly still until he had explored a way to the fox's den. As he peered from the lower end of the cleft, he saw that the shelf at his feet was fully a yard wide and almost perfectly level, and that the fox's den opened out on this shelf not more than twenty yards away. On such a shelf, were it only a foot or two above the ground, anyone might run at speed with entire safety; but the awful abyss below it would make any human vision swim. So, facing the cliff wall and steadying himself with his hands, he moved slowly with the utmost care and without turning his head, and at length came safely to the den. The test made, he returned more quickly to the crevice, to be greeted with a welcoming smile from his forlorn companion, whom, without a word,

he assisted promptly to her feet. Then, above the howling of the storm, and as the first raindrops fell, he bade her to take his hand and to follow carefully, to keep her eyes fixed upon the crevice wall only, and, once around the corner, fixed upon the face of the precipice, and by no means, even for a second, to glance out into the storm or down into the abyss below. And, going in this way, they reached the fox's den, and found a perfect shelter.

"How very unfortunate we are!" exclaimed Willie Pat as she looked out in awe upon the tempestuous dashing of the rain, the cloud-rending lightning and the tossing forests below; but her words were drowned in such a crash of thunder around them as seemed to rock the mountain. Blinded by the lightning flash the girl seized upon Danny convulsively, hiding her face upon his shoulder. When the paroxysm of fear passed and she ventured to raise her head, she still trembled so and her face was so deathly pale that Danny could but put his arm around her and comfort her as though she were a little child.

In time, the storm lifting, she freed herself, and Danny, making nothing of her fear nor of his ministrations of comfort, calmly filled and lighted his pipe. But Willie Pat would be off, and would hardly be restrained until the last shower had passed. And in this she was wise enough, for, rain or shine, the dripping trees and bushes and the wet grass would drench them soundly enough on their descent. And this indeed was what happened them, although they were none the worse for it after Aunt Mahala's kind and practical ministrations.

They drove home through

“....one of those ambrosial eves

A day of storm so often leaves”;

and when, at the porch of her home, Danny lifted his companion from the buggy, he could find no single word to say as, after but a momentary hesitation, she passed quickly into the house.

CHAPTER XI

MISS BOWLDER'S FINGER

MISS BOWLDER'S big, blue eyes stared solemnly at the white window curtain, which seemed to be beckoning to her urgently as it flapped gently in the morning breeze. For a moment this beckoning curtain was a baffling mystery to Miss Bowlder, but realization followed soon: Miss Bowlder was awake now, that was all;—and then, almost suddenly, how very wide awake! Strangeness and novelty were all about her. The exhilarating air which she drew into her lungs was not like the air of the city; it was like a tonic. And how startlingly transparent was the atmosphere! And the sounds that came floating through the open window,—how keen and distinct each one, and how different from those which Miss Bowlder's ears knew best! Morning in the city came with the rattle of the milk wagon, the buzz and hum of the trolley car, the rhythmic fall of footsteps on the sidewalk growing momentarily more multitudinous, the vari-toned peal of church bells, the strident scream and roar of factory whistles, the cries of the newsboys, the babel of automobile horns, and yet, softening all these sounds, the mysterious low undertone of the big city, never-ending as the murk of smoke and dust that broods over it and wraps it round. But, in the country, where every sound but punctuates a vast silence, how thrillingly clear the morning call of the robin, how rousing and

energetic the rat-ta-tat of the woodpecker, how rich and mellow the echo of cowbells in the distant wood! So Miss Bowlder is now quite wide awake and full of interest in her surroundings,—and interested first of all in her patient.

Her first step, therefore, on arising, is to go to look at Johnson. As he is still unconscious, or asleep, she will not disturb him. She steps to the window. A new sound strikes her ears, the sound of wheels upon the gravel drive in front. She wonders if it is Mr. Lacey. With Miss Bowlder, to feel a curiosity is to endeavor to satisfy it. She trips out upon the balcony, and there below, sure enough, is Danny; but there also is Miss Willie Pat getting into the buggy for their all-day visit to Aunt Mahala. Miss Bowlder tosses her head and returns to the sick room. Again her first glance is at her patient, in whom is taking place a very great change. He is gazing directly at her.

“Good morning,” she says smilingly and as casually as though this were the ordinary thing between them. “Do you feel better after your sleep?”

Johnson regarded her steadily for a moment, and then he inquired in a weak voice:

“Where am I?”

“Oh, you are away out in the country. Do you feel like sleeping some more?”

“What am I doing here? I cannot get up; I can’t lift my head.”

“No, you must not try to get up yet. You have been hurt. You had a fall. And now you must be quiet again.”

Johnson seemed to consider this. Next he asked:

“What place is this?”

"Does it hurt you to talk?"

"No; it doesn't hurt me to talk; it hurts me to move."

"Then lie still."

"But whose place is this? Who is taking care of me? This is not a hospital, is it?"

"No; this is Mr. Armstrong's."

For several moments Johnson's countenance resembled a meadow over which cloud-shadows race, as looks of surprise, curiosity, pleasure, and dislike followed one another rapidly. For several minutes thereafter he did not speak. Then he inquired: "Is Philip Armstrong here?"

"Yes," replied the nurse.

"Who else is here?"

"Why, just that man, Simkins, and the cook today."

"Simkins! Is he here?"

"Yes, that is what they call him. Isn't he the queerest man? I saw a catfish once, and it had a mustache just like Mr. Simkins'."

"That is Simkins," said Johnson. Then, after a pause: "I shall want to see Simkins after a while. Do you think I may? And will you try to get him here to see me?"

"Why, yes, if the doctor permits it."

After another pause, Johnson asked: "Isn't Miss Willie Pat here?"

"No; she went away in a buggy just before you woke up. She and Mr. Lacey are going somewhere to spend the day."

Hereupon, the nurse directed Johnson to talk no more, and busied herself making him comfortable. She took his temperature, brought him a cool drink, ad-

ministered some remedy, smoothed his pillow, made his bed neat, and then went downstairs. While she was gone, Johnson tried cautiously again to raise himself in the bed, but a terrible pain shot through his head, a pain that caused him to groan aloud and lie back, grateful to remain perfectly still, if by that means he could be free of it.

And now he tried to think over the situation in which he found himself. The last thing that he remembered with any distinctness was the mob before the jail, and Danny defying the mob and declaring himself Governor of the State. The fall and injury of which the nurse told him, and of which that terrible pain was a forceful reminder, remained for him a mystery completely curtailed. That Simkins was at the Armstrongs, angered and alarmed him as much as it puzzled him. And then for Willie Pat and that d—d stranger to be spending a day together, at any other time it would make him angry, jealous, sick of heart; but now he was tired; he would think about it all later on,—he would think about it later on. When the nurse came back upstairs, she found him again sound asleep.

All the while Philip and Simkins were plowing row after row in the tobacco field, and making good progress. When they paused to rest their teams, Philip said to Simkins:

"We shall be through by noon, Simkins, and you may have the rest of the day off as you wanted it. I wish to go into town this afternoon. In the Saturday crowd I may be able to find a workhand or two. This tobacco must be hoed first thing next week, and we shall need more help."

Early in the afternoon, Philip drove into town alone. Upstairs, Johnson was still asleep, and the nurse dozed in an easy chair over a novel. Downstairs, only Aunt Millie was to be found. Seated on the edge of a little side porch sheltering the kitchen door, her feet on the step, and tilting herself slightly so as to gain support from a porch post, Aunt Millie smoked her pipe in peace. What matter if it should go out and if she should fall asleep? It made no difference. The doctor had come and gone, and Aunt Millie was mistress of all she surveyed.

But where is Simkins? The last seen of Simkins by any of the Armstrong household was the view taken in by Aunt Millie's contemptuous glance at him as he passed through the 'pull' gate and turned away from town toward the river. He was, as usual, afoot. He carried a fishing pole and line and was accompanied by his dog. People of Simkins' caste always have a fishing outfit of some sort, a gun of some sort, and a dog or dogs of some sort, or blended sorts, the number being, as a rule, in proportion to the degree of fixity of their residence, and the blends being a matter of indifference; for persons of Mr. Simkins' stripe seem to accumulate dogs first and not much afterward, except perhaps what the dogs have to share with them. As Simkins had been only a day or two at home on the Armstrong place, and was still domiciled in the implement shed, he had as yet rallied but one dog to his support. But all this is neither here nor there; the point is that, to all appearances, Simkins was going fishing, the signs being: Saturday evening, carrying pole and line, walking toward the river.

A direct way, though a rough way, for Simkins

would have been to turn down the valley through which flowed the brook in which he once might have been drowned. Also he might follow the pike for about two miles and there come to a ford. Up the pike trudges Simkins till, after a single mile, he reaches the top of the ascent. Here he sends one quick glance around, then crosses a rail fence on the right and is lost at once in a dense woodland. On he goes and, at the end of a ten minute walk, comes to the edge of a bluff, below which is a narrow, walled-in valley, at this point very rocky and wild and filled with cedars, which succeeded somehow in taking root in this desolate and unpromising place. The stream flowing through was again the very one which runs by Danny's cabin. This secluded spot is on the Armstrong place, and is perhaps three-quarters of a mile above the house and half a mile from the falls over which Simkins fell, and the pool in which Danny delights to bathe.

But what is Simkins about? Is he going to fish in this little brook? No; for see, he throws his pole down over the cliff. And now he turns away from the bluff and retraces his steps, veering somewhat to the right and proceeding with caution. Now he pauses, and looks carefully around. He is in a very secluded part of the woods and is sheltered from view by dense undergrowth. The spot on which he stands is perhaps a hundred yards back from the ravine which he has just left. He is now standing at the edge of a depression in the ground, in which many bushes are growing, and one large tree. Simkins, after a last stealthy glance about, descends into this wild little hollow, making his way toward the large tree mentioned. Under the exposed root of this tree there is a hole, craftily hid-

den, and not unlike the entrance to a wild animal's den, except that no trail leads up to it. Here Simkins squats, turns his feet toward this hole and, going backward, disappears from view as completely as if the earth had swallowed him. Wait how one might and watch how one might, he would not see Simkins emerge from that hole again this day. True, a shower now came up, perhaps the skirt, as it were, of the severe storm that had earlier swept over Willie Pat and Danny on the top of Bohun's Knob, and naturally Simkins would remain under cover until it was over; but, had one waited till long after the shower had ceased, he would not have seen Simkins reappear where he was last seen. But, if he should watch long enough, say till sundown, he would have detected a light smoke curling slowly through the hole into which Simkins had sunk, and, if he were superstitious, he might believe that Simkins' oft repeated prediction as to his own dire future was now certainly and visibly realized.

But now it is sundown, and we may follow Simkins if we wish, although, in following him we must meander somewhat,—and the cause is not far to seek. For, as Simkins goes down the valley,—again with his pole over his shoulder,—he more than once draws from his hip pocket his handy flask, and from this he every time very handily takes a drink; and then he meanders more pronouncedly. But Simkins resembled a catfish in more respects than in the resemblance of his mustache to the straight-out fins of the fish, as noted by Miss Fancy Boulder. Both he and the fish have very broad mouths and very flat heads, and both have countenances of almost equal expressiveness. But the resemblance does not end here if rhetorical evidence

weighs as much as scientific evidence,—which commonly enough it does,—because in the matter of imbibition,—frequent, copious, apparently innocuous imbibition,—Simkins resembled most strongly the proverbial fish. There are men who, in their cups, become mellow and friendly, some who rise to unwontedly lofty sentiments and assume a grand air, others whose impulses take them to the heights of soaring oratory, there are those who become poetical, those who become hypersensitive and quarrelsome, those who grow vulgar or treacherous or base. There is a theory that in his cups a man reveals his true nature,—*in vino veritas*. On the other hand, in olden days it used to be said of certain stout drinkers, “He can drink like a gentleman,” the meaning and intent being flattering, and implying that the recipient of the compliment could drink and still behave himself, that he could drink and still give—in his conduct—little evidence of alcohol. Now Simkins belied both of these beliefs. He showed so little effect from his imbibings that in this one particular way he at least faintly and from afar resembled the fellow who could ‘drink like a gentleman.’ He became just a little more crooked in his gait and in his line of thought, just a little more suspicious, looked just a little more like a catfish.

And so, despite the numerous times our delectable Simkins had recourse to his flask, he gave evidence of having a fixed purpose in his mind. When he had come as far as the fall, he turned away from the stream toward the house, and, leaving his pole and line in his shed, and refreshing himself once more from his bottle, he cut across the lawn, climbed the rail fence and entered the wood. Here he followed the path along

which he had trailed Johnson the day before. This time, however, there was on his part no hesitation, no caution, no glancing around, no endeavor to hide from anyone. Simkins moved along the path with as firm a step and as erect a head as his drinks and his character would permit. It may have been characteristic of him to care too little even to pause when he came to the bluff which was at the edge of the wood, and over which he had toppled Johnson only the morning before. At any rate, he glided down the declivity and, without a moment's hesitation, turned his footsteps up the pike toward town. As he entered Dunsboro, he found the streets almost deserted. The Saturday crowd of rural shoppers were all either home or well upon their way. The business district was deserted, and in the residence streets the residents seemed to be all within doors.

Fashions of an earlier day still prevailed in many things in Dunsboro, and one of these was to call supper, "Supper," and another was to have supper early. For most of the residents of Dunsboro were at supper, and the bell was ringing the "Angelus" from the tower of the Catholic church as it had done, morning, noon and night, at six, twelve and six, for more than a hundred years. But Simkins was not seeking supper, nor was he concerned in the least in the ringing of the bell in the tower of the church. He was making his way directly to Johnson's garage, which was just off the main street at its busiest corner.

The garage was a converted livery stable, and ran from the street back to an alley. At the right of the front entrance was an office, the old stable office, remodeled and newly outfitted. Near the alley doorway at the rear there was also an office, which likewise had

come down from livery stable days, which had not been remodeled, nor outfitted, but in which business was carried on nevertheless, although the only furnishings were a few sacks of oats, a few bales of hay, an old, much-carved stool and, for mural decorations, a horse collar, a discarded laprobe and a few ill-assorted horse-shoes. Simkins entered by the front door and, ignoring the office, made his way directly to this dingy room at the rear. He locked the door behind him and, as we may not follow him in to see for ourselves what he may be doing, let us leave him for the present to his own devices and go back to the Armstrong place.

It is eight o'clock. Philip and his sister are sitting in Johnson's room, giving the nurse a needed rest and a chance to take the air. Johnson, who has been pronounced out of danger by the physician, is in a restful slumber. He had been anxious to see Simkins, and this would have been permitted him, but that Philip, who had just returned from town, could find no trace of him. And so Johnson had fallen asleep with his wish ungratified. As they sat together, brother and sister had but little to say to each other. They did not wish to disturb the quiet of the sick room, and, moreover, Willie Pat's thoughts were such as she would not yet share with anyone, however close and however beloved.

Miss Bowlder, who, upon her release from duty, had sought Danny immediately, found him sitting alone upon the porch. Here she established herself, somewhat to Danny's annoyance; for, after his day of delightful memories, Danny would have preferred by all means to be alone. Only one thing had withheld him from seeking the solitude of his cabin; he had hopes that he might again see a certain one, and that one was not Miss

Bowlder. Miss Bowlder, however, was not easily rebuffed, neither was she entirely without charm of a kind. She was pretty in a vivid way; also she was cheerful and communicative; she was lonely here at the Armstrongs, and now, finding herself in company with Danny, for whom she had at once conceived a strong liking, she exerted herself to entertain him and to draw from him some expression, or at least some sign, of regard for herself. And in this, for moments at a time, the young woman succeeded to a degree; but back upon Danny's imagination would flash the vision of Willie Pat,—of Willie Pat gazing in rapture upon the beautiful valley, of Willie Pat struggling with him up the steep side of Bohun's Knob, her little hand in his, of Willie Pat creeping with him around the perilous crag with awful death below and with a mad hurricane overhead, unquestioning in her trust in him, of Willie Pat,—oh, he could not endure this chatter of the nurse any longer.

"I'm parched with thirst," he said; "excuse me while I get a drink."

"Oh, I'll go with you," declared Miss Bowlder.

"I'd be glad to have you go," risked Danny politely, "but I am going down to the spring. It is dark, and you would not wish to climb down the rocky pathway."

"Surely I'll go," repeated Miss Bowlder, already upon her feet.

What else could Danny do? As they passed around the house, she slipped her arm in his. It was now quite dark, and the one square of light that fell from Johnson's window upon the lawn seemed startlingly clear. As they neared this illuminated spot, Miss Bowlder playfully leaned against Danny as if to push

him into the darkness as they went farther and farther from the house.

Now, Danny lost no time in making the trip to the spring and in bringing Miss Bowlder back to the house, although, in returning to the porch, they passed on the other side, and could not be seen from Johnson's room as they returned; and Danny, pleading fatigue, departed promptly for his cabin. But when, perhaps two hours later, Willie Pat, meeting Miss Bowlder at the head of the stairs, asked her if she had enjoyed her rest and whether she had been lonesome, Miss Bowlder replied quite happily:

"Oh, no indeed; Mr. Lacey and I have enjoyed each other's company. We have taken *such* a long walk."

CHAPTER XII

A HORROR IN ARCADIA

IT was mid-forenoon, sunny and warm, and Danny sat alone in his cabin. He was striving to interest himself in the newspaper, but striving without success; for his mind was painfully worried, and his heart was strangely depressed. His little world, yesterday a paradise, was today a desert, bleak, cruel, holding no hope. Why must such things be?

"The course of true love never runs smooth," mused Danny rather inanely but as though to console himself. "*Our* career has been uneven enough from the beginning, although I thought yesterday that everything at last was gloriously righted. What can have happened? She avoided me this morning, positively. She is very proud, I know; but why should she seem so haughty after our friendly and happy day yesterday? She was pale, too, and appeared hurt and unhappy. She is to take dinner with Katherine Mitre: that is merely in order to avoid being at home today. Something surely must have happened. Philip also was strangely reticent as we returned from church. I'll just get away from here myself. I don't see how I can stand that nurse's chatter and Philip's somber face at dinner."

Now, Danny was not unlike the rest of us. He was very much disturbed and puzzled, very much depressed, hurt and dismayed at the sudden coldness of Willie

Pat; and still, strangely enough, it wrenched his heart sorely to believe that *she* was suffering and to know that he could not come to her aid. To do so would be his tenderest wish. But her manner showed him that she held him as a stranger, held him even in such aversion or dislike as we cannot feel for a stranger. Danny rose up.

"I'll pack up my little kit and go exploring," he informed himself.

Shortly afterward, he stopped at Aunt Millie's kitchen door to tell her he would not be at home for dinner; that he was going out in the woods and would there cook his own. Aunt Millie, although amazed and perhaps offended, was also amused.

"Whar you gwine camp?" she inquired.

"I think I'll just go up the creek hollow a way," vouchsafed Danny.

"Yassuh, dat's a good place, 'case you'll find plenty of shade and of good water up dar."

And so, a few moments later, when Miss Bowlder who had come down to see about nourishment for Johnson, inquired whether Mr. Lacey were about, Aunt Millie was able to tell her exactly whither he had gone. Indeed, from the door of the kitchen she could still catch a view of him in the distance.

"Oh, I believe I'll make him take me along!" cried Miss Bowlder. "You can carry this tray up to Mr. Johnson, can't you? And don't tell anyone where I have gone."

"I won't tell anyone ef dey don't ax me," consented Aunt Millie, and then she added:

"'Case I know how to min' my own bizness an' to

let other folks' bizness alone, an' dat's mo'n some white folks kin do."

Miss Bowlder escaped this parting shot because she had already left the kitchen; and, indeed, it was only a few minutes later when she might have been seen going down the slope among the oaks to take the little pathway running up the valley. When she had crossed the brook at a stony shallow and started up the path, she did not hurry; indeed, she went with great deliberation; for, although silly and impulsive and, as some might think, bold, the young woman shrank from being detected by Danny in the act of following him; and, moreover, she instinctively felt that Danny would give her warmer welcome if he thought their meeting accidental and if it came as a surprise. And so she loitered.

But after a time the young woman found herself in a place where there could be no leisure if she were to proceed. She was in a deep, narrow valley. On either side were steep, rocky, blufflike hills, covered with cedar. Even in front of her the valley arose steeply, and with the converging walls the rising floor made a point; and almost at this point, just above some shelving rock, came two straggling rail fences to a point also. To get over these fences from the wild scramble below seemed almost impossible to Miss Bowlder, and she contemplated calling aloud for Danny, who, she hoped, must be near. But she overcame this impulse and began to look about for some way out of her impasse when, on the left, she noticed a trickle of water which, she knew from the purling sound and the shimmer of light among the mossy rocks and ferns above, must

come from a source higher up on the hillside. Looking upward in this direction, she was surprised to see through the leafage what seemed to be a black hole in the rock near the summit.

And now she noticed a little path, scarcely discernible, zigzagging its way up this side of the valley and apparently leading to this black hole. Miss Boulder followed this steep and crooked path, but only with great difficulty. It led around, and between, and sometimes over, great stones, and was oftentimes perilously close to beds of cress and other water plants which entirely concealed the little stream flowing beneath. As she drew nearer this hole, she discovered that it was much larger than it appeared from below, because a great stone, fallen from the cliff, concealed more than half the cave mouth. Moreover, the cavern inside swung away to the right and expanded into a large chamber. Out from this cave flowed the stream. Standing upon a stone to keep her feet dry, she peered in, entranced. As her eyes grew more accustomed to the dusk of the cave, she noticed that, although the middle parts were wet, or at least quite damp, back from the stream, the floor of the cave was higher and quite dry. A little red newt, running over her foot, drew her attention and made her shudder. Then she raised her eyes again, and beheld what she thought the figure of a man far back in the cave, face pale, and eyes fixed upon her. In terror, she uttered a scream and, turning, hastened her best down toward the valley. But this place was not fit for haste. Her foot slipped on a sloping, moist, mossy stone, and she fell, rolling over and over until caught and held by another protruding stone half way down the declivity. For a moment she lay dazed, and

then, looking up with apprehension, was relieved and delighted to see none other than Danny, coming out of the cave and descending toward her with long, rapid strides. She endeavored to arise from her awkward and ungainly posture, but was unable to do so until Danny, having reached her, gave her needed aid.

"Oh, you frightened me!" cried the now happy girl.

"I believe it," admitted Danny, "from the way you screamed. But you are limping! Have you hurt yourself?"

"Just my ankle," replied the nurse; "it turned when I slipped and fell. I'll go bathe it in the stream, and then you may come and help me again."

Danny assisted her down to a stone by the stream, where she could bathe her aching ankle, and then took a seat on the hillside until she should be through. Sitting there, he began to wonder what had brought her to this remote place. He wondered also that he felt no displeasure at her presence and even that he was glad that she had happened along. So that, when she called to him that she was ready, he went down to her without aversion and even with alacrity.

"How did you happen to come up here?" he asked her.

"How did you?" she countered.

"Oh, I like to get out once in a while, and rough it a little. So I came up the valley because it is pretty, and I stopped here because it is shady and there is good water to drink. You see, I came out to dine by myself."

"Would you object to company? Or have you enough for two?"

"I have plenty," Danny assured her.

"But what were you doing in that horrid cave?"

"Exploring."

"Did you find anything?"

Danny hesitated just a moment before replying to this; for he had found something. It was something very interesting to Danny and would make an interesting story to tell. But Danny reflected, and thus put her off:

"I found some 'water dogs' and bats. Did you see anything else?"

"Nothing else but a white-faced ghost that turned out to be you."

"Well," said Danny enigmatically, "it is a good thing you did not see anything more. Are you getting hungry?"

"Yes, I am."

"Then help me get lunch."

And so, after testing the direction of the wind, Danny built a little fire so that the smoke would blow from them, and, gypsylike, they feasted in the open. It was a royal setting for the feast, this grassy, cliff-walled valley, filled with the tonic scent of the cedars and with the music of the tumbling rill.

And now, while Danny is entertaining his unconventional and most unexpected guest, let us give heed to Philip, who is now seated morosely in an easy chair on the broad porch at home. Philip had seen, as we may recall, Danny and the nurse walking off together in the darkness, and he had some inkling of the late hour at which the nurse returned. And Philip had strong suspicions that Willie Pat's affections were already involved. He could strangle a man that would mistreat his sister. Of course, he could not charge

Danny with mistreating Willie Pat. Even if he could convict Danny of this, his disappointment in Danny, who had proved his friend, and whom he had found so noble, would be almost as painful as to witness his sister's sadness and humiliation. 'Twas no wonder Philip felt morose.

And now comes Simkins, slinking around the house.

"Mister Philip," he drawls, "do you reckon it would be all right for me to go in the house? I want to see Mr. Johnson."

"You may go in," replied Philip. "He is in the last room on the left of the hallway upstairs."

Simkins took his hat in both hands as he stepped upon the porch, and trod so lightly, and opened and closed the screen door so carefully that Philip, in his abstraction, scarcely heard him as he went. But this was not to be Philip's day to be left solitary. Hardly had he got rid of Simkins when, to his astonishment and pleasure, up rolls the family car, driven by Willie Pat, who stepped out alone.

"Why, Sis," cried Philip, "I am surprised to see you back so early. Didn't you have a good time? Why didn't Katherine come with you?"

"She cannot come till evening. I did not wish to wait so long for her, so I just came early myself."

"I am glad you did. I want to tell you about something."

"Is it something good?"

"Not very good, I fear, sister; only sensible. And not so bad, either. You know, the tobacco market is poor. In town yesterday I learned from the warehouse men and from some of the biggest planters that

they expect the very bottom to drop out of tobacco by the time the present crop is cut. Some say we shall not get, even for good tobacco, half the cost of raising it."

"That's a shame. Why is it?"

"The Tobacco Trust, every one is saying. They are talking of organizing a pool to fight the trust, but they all realize it is too late for this year's crop."

"But why do you want to tell me this bad news particularly today?"

"Why, so that we can fight the trouble. In town yesterday I got a chance of selling off five thousand cedar posts at a good price. We have the cedar, I think, and the price will tide over a bad time this fall and winter. Then we can hold our tobacco without inconvenience."

Philip was speaking the truth. But he had another reason for talking over the unfavorable outlook with his sister at this particular time. It was his kindly intention to get her mind off Danny and the nurse by interesting her in their business; and, besides, he thought it worth while to learn her sentiment about cutting the cedar trees for this proposed sale. It is true they had the trees, and this certainly seemed an opportune time to sell them. But to cut away so large a number would certainly ruin the beauty of their childhood fairyland. It was up the valley among the cedars that they used to go for their bravest adventures; for, even as they grew older, they could still find a thrill in faring forth in the dusk or in exploring the big, dark cave. And so he added:

"I thought you might like to walk up with me and look the cedars over. We might find some robbers, or spooks," he added playfully.

"All right; let us look for robbers. What shall we do now for robbers if we have to cut away the trees?"

"There will still be some left," replied Philip, "and new trees will grow in time."

And so Willie Pat went with her brother up the valley, in her heart a confusion of joy and sadness, of happy memories and of dark forebodings that this would be the very last time that she and her brother would visit the fairyland of their childhood days. In vision, she could already see the scarred, bare hillside, covered only with ragged stumps and sun-withered vegetation. But, as they went further, and penetrated into the wilder, narrower valley, the sheer beauty of the landscape, spread at peace and flooded with sunlight, would raise her spirits again.

"You sit here a few minutes, sister," commanded Philip, "while I go around the hillside and look the trees over. It will not keep me away more than a quarter of an hour."

Now, while Willie Pat sat here alone, hearing no sound but the murmur of the rill and, occasionally, the cracking of a dead branch or the rattling of falling pebbles that marked Philip's unseen progress along the wooded hillside, she became lost in thought to all the world around her. The days of her childhood came back to her, thoughts of her father, who, she fondly hoped, would return now very soon; of her sainted mother, who would never return; of Philip, so loyal and so kind to her; of Danny—ah, how could Danny be so shallow and so low! Within an hour after they had parted at the end of a perfect day, to think that he could forget or could care so little as to seek the company of this silly and uncultured creature,—Willie

Pat turned scarlet at the thought. But, friends, that was better than turning pale, for it was an evidence that, here in this lovely out-of-doors, she was recovering her spirit. For Willie Pat had spirit, and, as mentioned perhaps before Willie Pat had very sound common sense. And now even her common sense asserted itself, a thing not so ordinary with young women who are in love, and who unfortunately have cause for jealousy and disappointment and self-pity. So Willie Pat's common sense was very commendable, as she began to question whether there were really any ground for her grief and distress over Danny. Perhaps the nurse had not told the precise truth; perhaps Danny had thought nothing of the nurse and was led into her company accidentally or by the nurse's wiles. Indeed, this morning, Danny appeared to be as wretched as was she. Perhaps when they next met everything would be well. She did not dream how very near Danny was at the moment, nor did she dream that her presence there had given a rude shock of surprise to the estimable Simkins. For, from behind a cedar bush, that worthy watched her, with eyes dilated, as he assured himself vehemently, even though under his breath, that the Omnipotent designs—so far as they concerned him—were the most terrible to be imagined. Fascinated, he watched. Then, after a few moments, he declared his ancestral escutcheon most fully besmirched, apparently for no sounder present reason than the quiet reappearance of Philip Armstrong, returning to his sister after his inspection of the cedars, which covered the sides of the valley and extended back upon the upland which lay on the far side of the valley from the cave.

"Let us go up and look in the cave, Sis," suggested

Philip cheerfully. "It is many a day since I have been through it."

Willie Pat arose as she gave her assent, and she and Philip walked farther up the valley. As for Simkins, he for one moment stood stock still, his mouth fallen foolishly open, incapable of uttering even a familiar curse. As one fascinated, he followed after them. He heard Philip say: "Well, I'll go through alone. You can meet me up in the woods. We can go home the other way." Then Simkins followed no farther; instead, he turned and, with all his might, ran down through the valley toward the house.

And where, meanwhile, are Danny and the nurse from the city? When they had finished their lunch, which they had prepared and enjoyed in leisurely fashion, Danny proposed that they proceed homeward. But Miss Boulder, complaining still of her injured ankle, urged a little further rest.

"If your foot troubles you much," advised Danny, "it were better not to undertake the walk back through the valley as the way is so rough. I could help you up the side, here by the cave. From the top it is only a short walk through the woods to the pike, and from there on. If your ankle should become too weak, I could go and get the surrey and take you home."

"Oh, that is so kind of you! Let us go through the woods; I should love to see them."

So Danny and Miss Boulder climbed the hill, Miss Boulder claiming, perhaps, more assistance from her escort than was absolutely necessary, and then they came into the cool shade of the woods. For up here the breeze was stirring, and, after the arduous climb up the cliff, it was very grateful. They were attracted al-

most immediately by the shady, sloping sides of the little hollow, down from which led the hole where Simkins, only yesterday, was seen to disappear. Miss Bowlder immediately sat down to rest, while Danny was off to locate a squirrel which he had heard barking some distance away.

"Are you ready to go yet?" he inquired on his return.

"Not yet," answered Miss Bowlder. "I'll be ready in about fifteen minutes. Can't you wait for me that long?"

So Danny sat down with Miss Bowlder in the little hollow. And here they were when Willie Pat came upon them, her face flushed, her great eyes staring.

It came about in this way. The hole under the root of the trees was simply an opening into the rear end of the cavern where the subterranean walls drew closely enough together to permit one to descend by means of the projecting ledges, without danger, even in the dark, to one who knew the way. This narrow portion led forward into a large chamber, and from this a narrow passage led to the room which opened above the valley. Danny had been back as far as the second large chamber, and there he had discovered, to his utter astonishment, a small distilling outfit, evidently the carefully concealed property of a moonshiner. He did not know, however, that one could climb out of the cave and emerge through the hole visible under the root of the tree which now shaded him and Miss Bowlder. This, however, was well known to Philip, who, in his boyhood days had often and again passed through the cave either way. He had proposed, as we know, to his sister that they do so now, but she declined reluctantly,

and solely because she wore a much prized dress. She had told Philip to make the passage by himself, and promised to wait for him under the big tree, where he would come out. It was in fulfillment of her promise that she had come to this spot.

It would be difficult to describe the mingled emotions experienced by Philip's sister under the shock of this very unpleasant surprise. But these emotions were short-lived, and we need not dwell on them here. For now, even before Danny or the nurse had discovered her presence, all of them hear footsteps approaching from the direction of the pike, and, looking, they behold, in a few moments, four strange men, armed with rifles and hastening toward them with long eager strides. They were tall men and lanky, and all wore slouched hats and drooping mustaches.

"Good evenin'," calls their leader in a soft, drawling voice. "What are you three doin' right here?"

"Three? There are only two of us," returned Danny unconcernedly. But, following the glances of the others, he for the first time discovered Willie Pat. He sprang to his feet.

"Sit down," warned the fellow with the soft, drawling voice.

Danny looked into the cold, blue eye and at the powerful rifle, and obeyed.

"What are you all a-doin' here? Kin you answer me?"

Certainly enough they could have answered him, and in all likelihood they would have answered him, had not one of the riflemen at the instant shocked and astounded every one of them by crying:

"Come out! Don't you run!" and instantly thereupon by raising his gun and firing.

"I got him!" he shouted, as he ran toward the hole.

The other armed men rushed up with him, and Danny and the nurse followed at a little distance. But Willie Pat covered her blanched face with her hands and sat down; and then, with a moan, she fainted away.

CHAPTER XIII

LIFE AND DEATH

WHAT explanation is there for the almost incredible and tragic situation in which this group of people find themselves here in the quiet woods and on this silent Sabbath afternoon? The four riflemen, of course, are agents of the Government, in this instance, of the Federal Government; so are the two just now approaching the mouth of the cave, having come up the valley. Their business was, of course, to raid the still and, if possible, to capture the moonshiners, whoever they might be. But how did these officers know of the still in the cave? Why did they make their raid on a Sunday afternoon? And how did it happen that they arrived just at the one moment when Philip and his sister and Danny and the nurse were on the spot? We must not forget Simkins. From behind a cedar bush, we may recall, he had seen Philip and his sister and had heard them arrange for Philip's trip through the cave. Immediately he had turned his back upon the scene, and had run with all his might toward the house. Unseen, as he thought, he entered, and hurried upstairs to Johnson's room.

"Mr. Johnson," he cried, panting, and not giving his employer time to express his surprise or to ask a question, "Mr. Phil has gone into the cave. What in h—l must we do?"

"How do you know he went into the cave?"

"I just now saw him. He'll find the still surer'n h—I, and he will report it to the officers. The Government men are in town right now. They came from the city yesterday."

Johnson pondered for a moment. "He may not come across the still at all. You can't see anything, or smell anything in the front part of the cave, can you? And isn't the still pretty well hidden back in the second big chamber?"

"Yes, I know; but he said he was a-goin' on th'ough. Right straight th'ough, an' up th'ough the hole into the woods."

"How do you know he is?"

"I heard him tell Miss Willie Pat so. He wanted her to go th'ough with him; but she wouldn't. She's goin' to meet him at the hole when he comes out."

"He'll find it then," admitted Johnson, and for a moment seemed lost in deep but unpleasant thought.

"Go down stairs," then he ordered Simkins curtly, "and call up the sheriff. Tell him that if he will rush out immediately, he will find a still and capture a moonshiner. Insist that he come with a posse right away, and tell him just how to reach the cave. Then hang up, without letting him know who you are. When you've done that, go up the hollow as fast as you can, and watch them. But don't let them see you. If they start to leave before the posse comes, talk to them and hold them there."

Simkins left the room, and did all he was told to do. But, as he hastened stealthily up the hollow, he did not fail to grumble to himself over the danger into which Johnson had ordered him. For Simkins was the real moonshiner, the real culprit, and for him to be seen

about the cave would almost certainly entangle him in the meshes of the law. And, once in, it would be exceedingly difficult for him to wriggle out. Johnson might do all he could to save him, but how much could Johnson do for him if he were once convicted? In such case, Johnson would likely be convicted also. For Johnson financed the moonshining, and also the illicit traffic in the back office of the garage, although Simkins did all the work at the still, spending hours of his nights there, and took most of the risk in selling the inferior white stuff to Johnson's customers in town. Simkins thought of all this as he now went into real danger, and a bitter resentment, and even a quick and deadly hatred of Johnson, flared up in his heart. But still he went on, out of curiosity as much as fear, and never losing caution. This was well for him, for soon his accustomed eye discovered, a hundred yards ahead of him, the stealthily advancing figures of the two "Government men." And so, when the tragic shot rang out, and Philip Armstrong fell limply back into the stygian darkness of the cave, and his body lay huddled and motionless on the dank floor, Simkins was still some distance from the scene. And here, keeping himself in hiding, he waited. The shot had told him the officers were on hand. Later, through the trees he espied men entering the mouth of the cave. After a few minutes, he saw them coming out, carrying a burden. Then, crashing through the "brush," splashing recklessly through water and muck, leaping wildly from stone to stone, came Danny Lacey down the rugged hillside. He turned down the valley and ran as though his very life depended upon his speed. As he neared Simkins, that interested observer asked:

"What's the matter, Mr. Danny?"

"Philip is shot! Come on with all your might."

Simkins took up the run in Danny's wake. When they crossed the stream just above the fall, Danny ordered:

"Run down and have the gate open for them. Then come back to the house at once."

Danny himself, as soon as he entered the house, seized the telephone, and called both Dr. Coakley and Father Roche, in the desperate hope that life still remained. Likewise he called up Colonel Mitre and directed a wire to Philip's father at Hot Springs. By that time the officers' car rolled up to the door, and, as they insisted on carrying Philip's bloody, battered, inert form up to his room, into which they were led by Miss Bowlder, it was Danny's sweet but melancholy privilege to take into his arms the still unconscious Willie Pat, and bear her into the house, where, seeing a comfortable couch in the family room, he laid her down and, calling for Aunt Millie, hurried out for cold water. As he turned toward the spring, a glance showed him Simkins standing in the shade of a tree. The wretched fellow was wringing his hands and squirming with his body as he shifted his feet uneasily, and, strangest of all, he seemed to be crying in a low, whining tone, while genuine tears coursed down his tanned cheeks and flowed into his fin-like mustache. No catfish ever knew the misery of Simkins.

And now the officers of the law betake themselves off, and a great hush falls gradually upon the place. An hour passes, and Philip still lives. Indeed, although scarcely breathing and ghastly pale, he appears so fresh and clean and rested after the nurse's ministrations,

that Willie Pat, who at first felt certain he was killed instantly, is filled with new hope; and Katherine Mitre, who is at the bedside with her, can now smile wanly in a brave attempt to keep up her own and Willie Pat's courage. Below, in the cool, dusky parlor, sit three almost venerable men, friends of half a century,— Colonel Mitre, Father Roche, and Dr. Coakley. Philip's condition was so desperate that Dr. Coakley, knowing the practices of his friend's church in times of dangerous illness and death, had suggested to Father Roche that he remain a little while longer.

"Hasn't he any chance at all?" queried the Colonel in a voice almost of entreaty.

"I'm afraid," replied Dr. Coakley, "he is terribly hurt. The ball entered the upper part of his right chest and, owing to his posture as he climbed out of the hole, it ranged downward, passing through the full length of the lung and barely missing the spinal cord. Then the shock of the fall and the broken arm and the lacerated head all make the case more critical. If he should live for a few hours longer, or, better still, through the night, then, if no complications set up, and if his heart is strong, with the fine constitution he seems to have and with good nursing, he will have a fighting chance."

"Somehow, I feel hopeful he'll come through," volunteered Father Roche; and the doctor respectfully heard, and took what comfort he could from the priest's words, which was not little; for he knew the value of Father Roche's long experience at the bedside of the desperately sick.

"Well, we can only hope," said the Colonel gravely.

"No, Colonel, we can pray, and pray earnestly," corrected Father Roche. "I want even *you* to pray this time, doctor."

"I'll do it, Father Roche," agreed the physician in a matter-of-fact tone, adding, after a moment, "this time."

For the doctor, in his earlier days, had been an agnostic, and although in latter years believing in an intelligent First Cause, he had not much esteem for organized religion as he saw it preached and practiced in the many conflicting systems all around him. If he acceded now to Father Roche's request, it was in large measure because of their deep friendship and because of his affection for "Pat" Armstrong and his two children, whom he had known and cared for since birth. The Colonel, on the contrary, was of quite another type of mind. He could not understand how anyone could doubt the existence of a Supreme Being nor man's responsibility to Him. He derived much peace and comfort from his own faith, which was that of Father Roche. He was convinced of the great value of religion in making life itself better and happier. As to life after death, that seemed no more mysterious to him than life now. He had no doubts whatever about it, and so regarded life here as only a preparation for life hereafter.

In other things, these three were of one mind. In politics, not one of them had ever "bolted" or "scratched" a Democratic ticket. Even prohibition did not divide them, and this is rather remarkable, since every one of them had changed his mind on the issue more than once. In the early days of the movement, they had all opposed it as fanatical and ridiculous. By

degrees, they had all come around to the support of the idea, and had voted for it in both county and State elections. They opposed, as far as they could, the amendment of the Federal constitution to enforce prohibition, and latterly they were all coming to doubt both the wisdom and the rectitude of their conduct in approving prohibition at all. Not that they did not know and deplore the evil of drink, but that it was borne in on them by conditions in their own county, that the evils of drink were only doubtfully improved by prohibition, while there was no doubt that prohibition had brought other and greater evils in its train.

If Philip Armstrong should die, he would be the third within a month murdered by prohibition officers within the county. During the past week a citizen driving home by night was roughly commanded to stop by the occupants of a passing car. Fearing a holdup, he sped on his way, and was pursued and fired upon. It developed that his attackers were prohibition officers. Nine-tenths of the cases on the last Circuit Court docket, were cases growing out of the violation of the prohibition laws or of the violent attempt to enforce them. Armed posses of citizens accompanied the Government's raiders of stills, and neighbors, in the raided vicinities, armed themselves in defense of their lives. Citizen was being turned against citizen. Roads, schools, agricultural improvement suffered for want of official attention, which was now directed almost entirely to detecting and punishing makers and purveyors and users of strong drink. The great profits to be had in the illicit trade in whiskey were making "bootleggers" of men who had previously been law-abiding; their contempt for law was an encouragement to the

lawlessly inclined, and crime was flourishing as never before. Citizens had been impoverished by fines and by confiscation of their property because illicit stills had been found upon their lands, although, in some instances, they had neither interest in, nor knowledge of, the forbidden business. All this was in the mind of the three friends, sitting worried and anxious in the shadowy parlor. If Philip should die and "Pat" Armstrong's place be confiscated, and "Pat" Armstrong remain helplessly crippled, what a situation would be created for himself and Willie Pat! If Philip should die, what could disprove his knowledge of the still in the cave? The fact that he was shot as he came out of the cave was damning. The pretty story Miss Willie Pat could tell of the reason why they were there could not offset the fact that Philip had been in the cave.

Now, this evil situation had been deliberately brought about by the designs of Bill Johnson. Johnson had found it a very profitable adjunct to his garage business to handle liquor secretly "on the side." He could very greatly increase his profits by manufacturing his own product, a thing he had been doing for more than a year, now at one place, now at another. The still hidden away in the cave up the remote valley on the Armstrong place had not yet been in operation so long as a week. It had been planted there by Johnson shortly after he had learned that Philip Armstrong was about to return home. For the time being, it could be used to supply his business,—or part of it,—and at his own good time he could have it 'discovered' and raided, to the embarrassment, perhaps the ruin, of the Armstrong family. That would eliminate Philip Armstrong and his father as enemies to be feared, and it

would lower or break Willie Pat's proud spirit. He could then by greater devotion and a show of sympathy and generosity quickly win her. Today's events had not greatly changed his plan; they had only hastened the carrying out of it. When he had learned from Simkins that Philip Armstrong was in the cave and would almost certainly discover the still, he feared, and with sound reason, that Philip would report to the authorities, if for no other purpose than to exculpate himself and family and thus protect their home. With the prohibition officers informed and in active search for the culprits, Simkins would very likely take panic and endeavor to save himself by involving Johnson. Johnson knew this particularly well because he knew Simkins and his type particularly well. And so he decided that the moment had come for the springing of the trap.

Coolly Johnson thought all this over as he lay, now free from pain, in his bed. He saw no reason whatever to change his plan or to regret his action. If Philip should die, it would be Philip's bad luck and his own good luck. He had not planned Philip's death. If he should die, one great obstacle between himself and Willie Pat would, he was profoundly convinced, be removed. If he should die, it would be an easy matter for the confiscation of the Armstrong place to be brought about. The illicit still was discovered and captured on the place; and Philip Armstrong had guilty knowledge of this still, for he was seen coming out of the cave in which it was operated. It was a clear case and a good case for Johnson. But what of the present moment? What should he do right now? It was Johnson's good mind that made him so bad a

man, it was his safe mind that made him a dangerous enemy. This good mind told him now that it were best for him to leave the Armstrongs for the present, *and to take Simkins with him*. When, therefore, the nurse opportunely came in to seek some article she needed at Philip's bedside, Johnson, after inquiring for Philip, requested her to find and set out his clothes for him, and by all means to have someone send Simkins up to him at once. He told her he owed his life to her, and that he would never forget it; he told her that she was the prettiest nurse that ever wore a uniform; he told her to be sure to call for him when she was ready to leave the Armstrongs and wanted a conveyance. He would come for her himself. In much of this he was sincere, and in all of it he had a purpose, for Johnson knew the ways of women, and from this woman he wanted an immediate service, and possibly further friendliness, and an excuse for coming back to this home in an hour of trouble and sorrow.

Miss Bowlder responded so well to Johnson's wishes that it was scarcely half an hour before he was sitting up, dressed, and smiling a greeting at Simkins, who, hat in hand and with catlike tread, advanced from the door of the room.

"Tom," spoke Johnson in his friendliest manner, "I'm glad to see you again. You have been through some excitement within the past two or three hours, haven't you? Too bad about Phil. I wonder what he was trying to do when the Government man shot him? It is certainly hard on the family, and I want to get away so as not to give them any more trouble. I'm a little weak yet, and want you to help me down the stairs

and ride into town with me. Call the garage, and have them send a car out. Better call right away, and ask if they will have it here in about thirty minutes."

As Simkins departed, Miss Bowlder again entered, and Johnson seized the opportunity to have her request Miss Willie Pat to come out into the hallway to see him before he left.

"Yes, I'll tell her," agreed the nurse cheerfully; "but, 'turn about is fair play,' and I want you to tell Mr. Lacey that I want to see him on the porch after supper."

"That I'll surely do, if we have to look all over the place to find him," Johnson assured her. Everything was going as he wished. An affair between the nurse and Danny might disgust Willie Pat, at the least, with her farm hand admirer. If so, so much the better for Johnson.

And now Willie Pat appears in the hall, pale, large-eyed. In a low tone, Johnson hastened to speak:

"Miss Willie Pat, I am distressed more than I can say at what has happened. But you must not give up hope. I look for Philip to pull through. Take good care of yourself, and be sure to call on me for anything in the world. I want you to do that. Is there anything you can think of for me to do at once? I shall be in your debt forever for your taking care of me."

"There is one thing you might do. Could you bring papa here from the train? He will reach Dunsboro some time tomorrow."

"I'll bring him myself, if I am able to drive. I hope to see you just a moment then, and to find that Philip is better."

Johnson proffered his hand and was delighted with

the cordiality of Willie Pat's clasp. He did not appreciate the loneliness and the dependence of her position nor the value of even his interested offers of kindness. Having made his farewell so much to his satisfaction, Johnson descended the stairway alone. He found Simkins awaiting him near the front of the house and a car from his garage, with engine purring softly. He climbed in at once, and called to Simkins to follow. He was then joined unexpectedly by Father Roche, of whose presence in the house he had not been aware.

"I'll ride with you, Bill," said the priest. "I am glad you are better from your accident. That's a sad case in there. Who would believe Philip set up that still? He has not been home five days yet, I wonder how those deputies happened to raid on a Sunday afternoon? And how did they know the still was there? They had information, certainly, and they expected to capture someone, else they would not have approached in two parties. This thing of turning neighbor against neighbor is the worst result of this prohibition business."

"You don't think, then, that Phil was moonshining in the cave?" queried Johnson.

"I certainly do not think so. Neither do you. He has not been home yet five days. He could not get a still ready in that much time, and this still has been producing for a week."

"What do you suppose he was doing in the cave?" asked Johnson.

"I *know* what he was doing there. That will all come out at the proper time."

"If Phil dies, how is anybody going to know?"

"Please God, he is not going to die."

"I sure hope he won't," unexpectedly drawled Simkins. "Mr. Phil's a good man, an' he keeps a-gittin' better, while a heap of us keeps a-gittin' worse."

Johnson let Father Roche out at his home next to the Catholic church. As he and Simkins drove to the garage, he addressed his companion with a lowering countenance, and hissing through gritting teeth:

"Tom, if you ever let one word escape you about all this;—one word, mind you;—you'll be sorry you were ever born!"

CHAPTER XIV

MR. SIMKINS VISITS THE CABIN

IN the small hours before the dawn, Philip Armstrong died. He had never recovered consciousness. There was no struggle in his passing; it was as if he fell asleep. Near him to the end were his sister, Katherine Mitre, and the Colonel, the nurse doing mutely what she could. Only the soft weeping of the two girls told that all was over. The Colonel, leaving them together, passed out under the stars. The meaning of death was better known to him than to the weeping girls above. This knowledge advancing age brings to all. But it does not render age callous. It does not fortify against the shock when another dear one leaves forever. On the contrary, youth it is that can shake off grief; it is youth that recovers from the heavy blow which death lays upon the fond and loyal heart. Men and women in middle life may manifest less grief, but their grief will last the longer even though they protest their sorrow not at all. A greater tenderness also for those in grief is theirs, and especially for the young whom sorrow claims. And so, after a loving and pleading prayer for Philip, the boy he had seen grow to manhood, the son of his friend and the lover of his own dearest daughter, the tender-hearted Colonel gave his solicitude to Katherine and Willie Pat. Tomorrow he must try to console his old friend, whose home-coming would be the saddest he could ever know.

And now, out from under the shadow of the oaks on the grassy slope, comes Danny also into the starlight. A dozen times since darkness had fallen, Danny had gone to his cabin, only to come out again, sometimes to pace up and down nervously near his own door, sometimes wandering aimlessly along the creek, sometimes walking up the avenue so as to be near the house, and always watching the light that gleamed softly from the windows of the room in which life and death struggled for possession of the friend he loved. How quickly he would have sped to that bedside if his heart had its way! But, in times of grief such as this, it is only the nearest and dearest that may come close together, only the old friends, tried and true. All others are intruders. And still, yesterday, he would not so have hesitated. It was only this morning that Willie Pat had shown him by her cold and forbidding demeanor, what was, after all, but the truth, that he was only a stranger. He realized this now. And yet he could not rest in his cabin; he could not refrain from looking up to those dimly lighted windows. Now he leans wretchedly against a great oak as he gazes, in his soul beseeching Philip to make a good fight and come safely through, when, all at once, his figure sags, his heart sinks within him; he sits down upon the ground, his head bowed between his knees, for his ears had caught the first soft weeping of the girls above.

"May God be good to you, Phil," he murmured softly, and over and over again, "May God be good to you, my friend."

The softened sounds of subdued grief again penetrated to his consciousness, and he rose up slowly. Then falteringly he found his way to the avenue and kept

on toward the front of the house. We saw him as he came out of the shadow of the oaks and into the starlight. Now he espies the Colonel, and advances slowly toward him.

"Colonel, this is Danny Lacey. Tell me," he said.

"Yes, it is true," replied the Colonel slowly, "He never regained consciousness, and, only a few minutes ago, he left us."

"Take me upstairs," urged Danny.

When they came into the room, Willie Pat and Katherine passed quietly out, and soon also the Colonel withdrew, leaving Danny alone. Danny could not find it in his heart to do aught else but stay. For long moments he would gaze at the pale lineaments of his friend, deep in pity and sorrow and his own sense of loss. Then his mind would run back over their short acquaintance, and even he would wonder at the closeness of the bond that had grown between them in so short a time. No, the torment in his heart, because of the sister, neither caused nor rendered greater his affection for the brother. Philip's manliness, shown in a hundred ways beside his candid acknowledgement of a checkered past, his high sense of honor, his loyalty to those who had a claim to it, his modest self-effacement, his coolness and fearlessness in danger, these things commanded Danny's respect and affection, and the recollection of them now only filled his loyal heart with woe. It was not so with the sister. This thing in his heart that kept calling always for her, that kept her image in his imagination, that leaped up at the sound of her footstep and thrilled at the tones of her voice, the thing that only yesterday almost choked him with joy when on their long drive together, this thing might be love.

If it was, it was love without that tranquil confidence and unruffled patience that characterized the friendship he had entertained for Philip.

So, in his mind came now the thought that, Philip gone, he too, should go away. There is no future here his judgment assured him. He had come for a rest; what rest had he known or was he likely to know in this place? Even if the excitement of objective events should subside, he could know no rest within while living near Willie Pat Armstrong. Besides, from her coolness, from her recent manifestation of disdain and even of dislike, she would, he judged, rejoice at his departure. Was he a man, or was he a kitten, to hang around a woman that despised him? Then the trend of his mind would change, and he would feel a great pity for the object of his thoughts, so young, so weighted down with grief and heavy responsibility. How gladly he would assume a brother's place, and lift from her shoulders at least the heavy burden of the farm. It might be that, in decency, he would feel obliged to remain until she could secure someone to take his place. The father was returning, not because well again, but because the call of blood constrained him. If the father was too ill to live at home, what would he be able to do?—Nothing, probably. Then Danny's honest soul reflected for him:

"*I want to stay. I just want some excuse for staying. It is all a question of what Willie Pat thinks of me. After the funeral, I'll put it squarely up to her. 'After the funeral!'*"

Danny rose up and paced the floor. He felt the nearness of his friend's remains on one side of the room, he noted the windows greying over with the

pale light of dawn on the other. He moved to a window to let the cool, dewy breath of dawn refresh him after his sorrowful and lonely vigil. While he looked the first drowsy twittering of the birds awoke in the trees. Little by little he could distinguish one tree from another. Before many moments had passed, he thought he could even discern the grey form of his cabin in the hollow, and even the bush-grown line of rail fence separating it from the pike. Once even, he fancied he saw, however dimly, a figure crossing over the fence from within. A moment later, he heard wheels and hoof beats upon the pike, passing toward town, and he reflected upon how little difference to the world at large makes the very deepest grief of the individual. Death? Unrequited love?—"You'll get over it," the world will say.

While Danny still stood at the window, the Colonel entered the room and suggested that he go and catch a little sleep.

"I napped in the chair, myself," the Colonel informed him, "and you should get some rest now. We shall depend upon you for many things tomorrow; so get yourself into shape."

Knowing of nothing he could better do, Danny quietly quit the house and went down to his own little cabin and, entering in, threw himself upon the bed. Sleep was far from him, and, in the shadow of death, which saddened every feeling and sombered every thought of those about him as well as of his own, the sweet dawn delighted him none, nor could the growing beauty of the morning win him forth from his lonely room, in which the daylight was only now strong enough to make every object entirely plain. As his eyes wandered

aimlessly about, restless as his own thoughts, they were arrested by particles of fresh, moist clay on several rounds of the ladder leading to the loft. The thing was startlingly plain. This soil on the ladder rounds was so dark that it must be quite fresh. Someone had recently climbed up the ladder. Would he never have any privacy from these intruders? Ah, yes, from one he would. God forgive him for even this approach to an unkindly thought of Philip. But, then, who had been up that ladder? He must see. There was mud, or wet clay, on the floor beneath the ladder, and there was more making a straggling line between the foot of the ladder and the back door. Danny quietly found his flashlight and pistol and, with as little noise as possible, made his way up the ladder and looked into the loft, searching every spot over with his light. There was no one there. That someone had been there, Danny felt certain, but who it was or what his purpose, Danny felt it idle to speculate. And still this mysterious visit concerned him singularly. The clay on the ladder was from Simkins' boots.

We have seen enough of Simkins to suspect mischief wherever he is about. Only one honest and humane thing have we ever discovered him at. When he stood under the tree yesterday afternoon with tears stealing from his eyes, his wretched, stunted heart was genuinely touched, his tears were honest tears. No man had more of his respect and confidence than Philip; no woman approached the altar of his worship, upon which he had enthroned Willie Pat. And yet he had connived against them and had helped to compass their ruin. As they were carried into their home unconscious, one wounded unto death, the other stricken

with grief too great to endure, he seemed to realize in some measure his part in this cruel thing. Pity, sorrow, and remorse overcame for a time even his fear of Johnson; and that is a tribute to Simkins, for this fear of Bill Johnson was ancient, ingrained, and abject.

Johnson knew that Simkins was afraid of him, and that it was this and nothing else that bound Simkins to him. That is why he had hissed at him his terrible warning as he and Simkins drove toward the garage after leaving Father Roche at home. And that is why he did not hesitate to command Simkins immediately to perform for him another unworthy and degrading service, which was, to 'plant' his remaining stock of "moonshine" in Danny's cabin, so as thus to incriminate Danny and to protect himself. For he knew that, as soon as decency would permit it, the officers would make search all over the Armstrong place for further incriminating evidence, and he feared that his own premises would be searched because, in a somewhat wide and somewhat faithful circle he was well known as a master "bootlegger." The Federal agents might be charged with inconsiderateness in their methods, but they could not be charged with lack of vigor and thoroughness. So, after he had entered the rear office with Simkins and had closed and locked the door, he first insisted that Simkins take a generous drink, and then gave him his orders.

"Get this stuff out of here at once. When dark comes, carry it out to the Armstrong place and, as soon as you get a chance, hide it in the loft of the cabin where that fellow Lacey sleeps. Don't try to keep it from sight as you go. Leave it in that sack of oats and fasten the sack behind the buggy seat in full view of every-

body. This place of ours will be raided tomorrow, most likely. We'll see to it that Lacey's nigger cabin will be raided at the proper time. Then our defense is complete,—unless someone squeals; and the fellows that buy from us don't dare squeal."

"Why can't I just take the stuff out and hide it, or pour it in the creek or something. What's the use of gittin' Danny Lacey in trouble?"

"You do as I say," snapped Johnson sternly, "and then you'll not have any trouble. If you want trouble, just go back on me."

"You'd a-been in trouble yourse'f if I hadn't kep' you from shootin' Friday mornin'."

"I know it, Tom, and we are not going to fall out unless you play crooked. If you do that, you'll be lucky to escape into the penitentiary alive; and you'll be unlucky, and you'll curse the day when you get out. Now, I'm not strong enough to stay here any longer. I'm going home and to bed. If I'm not here early in the morning, look me up and tell me how you have succeeded."

Then Johnson left, and Simkins, to pass the time, took several drinks of the colorless, fiery liquid. He did not, however, on that account, neglect his business, and nine o'clock found him driving through the main street of Dunsboro with the sack of oats fastened almost conspicuously to the rear of the buggy. At the hotel corner he was halted by the town marshal.

"What you got in that sack, Tom?"

"Oats, I reckon; I ain't opened it to see."

"Don't b'lieve you'd open it to see. 'Pears to me you kinda *feelin'* your oats, ain't you? Where you goin' to?"

"Jes' out to the Armstrong place. I been workin' there 'bout th'ee days."

"Did you know Phil Armstrong was shot today?"

"Yes; I heard about it."

"It's a d—n shame. Them fellers won't git no he'p out o' me lookin' for moonshiners. Wouldn't surprise me if somebody pots 'em before they git out o' this country."

"Jes, between us, you're goin' to hear somethin' from these here oats yet. Don't say nothin' though."

"What's it all about?"

"You'll hear; don't say nothin' about it, but you'll hear."

This highly intellectual conversation does more than many highly intellectual conversations, in this, that it makes at least one fact clear, the fact that the town marshal of Dunsboro was not the mortal enemy of Simkins nor of those who love the 'moonshine'. So now let Simkins drive on while we follow leisurely and reach the Armstrong place ten minutes behind him. We pass the gate, we cross the creek, we ascend the farther slope until directly opposite Danny's cabin. There is a buggy near the fence and the horse is hitched to a rail with one of the lines. There is no sack, however, in the rear of the buggy, and there is no Simkins on the seat. Simkins and the sack are both in the thicket to the rear of the cabin. Simkins has removed three jugs from the sack, and is waiting for an opportunity to pass, unseen, into the cabin. But Danny does not give him the opportunity. If Danny would get into bed and go to sleep, Simkins would risk it. Or, better still, if Danny would go up to the house, or anywhere else, and stay a while, he could finish the job at once. But Danny

was in and out, in and out continually. Simkins could hardly resist the temptation to step forth from his hiding place and talk to Danny. There were moments when he felt strongly impelled to come out and tell Danny what he was there for and to unfold to him all of Johnson's damnable plots. But fear of Johnson restrained him; and when, as we have told already, Danny at length went up to the house and took up his sorrowful vigil, Simkins carried his jugs into the cabin, and bestowed them under the pile of corn shucks, which we have seen more than once in the low corner of the loft. Had he known he was doing this further treachery at the very moment when Philip Armstrong was dying, Simkins might have repented, and braved Johnson's vengeance. As it was, he hurried out to his buggy as soon as the ugly job was done, and drove without delay and at a good pace, back to town. But he muttered more than once under his breath:

"I'll inform on him, d—d if I don't, if they arrest Danny, or if he makes more trouble for Miss Willie Pat."

Meanwhile Danny, although he well knew that someone had been in the cabin, had neither suspicion nor care about it at all, and was now fast asleep. Day had come. It was Monday morning.

CHAPTER XV

WILLIE PAT SEES

MONDAY, in Dunsboro, is usually a very quiet day; but this Monday morning promises a day of anything but quiet. Earlier than usual the wood-fire smoke ascends from the kitchen chimneys; here and there the appetizing odor of frying bacon,—or is it ‘country’ ham?—floats out over the street; and breakfast bells are rung with an energy that promises good cheer and a lively day ahead. Earlier than usual store shutters are taken down and sidewalks in the business district are sprinkled and swept. Earlier and more frequent and more hurried is the sound of hoof beats upon the hard surface of the street, for country people are coming in, and there is much ado within the town itself. In and about the hotel kitchen there is unusual clatter; the lawyers sit ready in their offices ranged about the courthouse square, although it is as yet scarcely seven o’clock; before the livery stables are long lines of vehicles, pushed out by the stable boys to make room within; there is unwonted activity at the garages, where arrivals are frequent and departures few, and where groups form for conversations, today unwontedly quiet; in the courthouse, every official is to be discovered in his office, a most unusual thing indeed; and on every road leading into town, could we but have a birds-eye view, we could see vehicles making their way, fast or slow, uphill or down, winding about

or straight ahead, but all moving toward one objective, all moving toward town. For today is County Court Day.

Today the hotel must accommodate many who have driven long miles after rising early. Today the merchants must busy themselves with their sales and their courtesies to the crowd of court-day shoppers. Today the lawyers must all be on hand, not that all have cases in court, but to see and be seen by their clients, and to transact the real estate, or insurance, or other businesses which lawyers find a necessary supplement to their profession in the little country towns; today the gambler and bootlegger are astir to entertain and to fleece as many of their customers as possible. Today the housewife is busy about many things, for she is almost sure of 'company.' If Cousin Robert has to serve on the jury or has business that will occupy him for most of the day, he will surely leave Cousin Mattie and the children with Aunt Ellen while in town. The editor of the *Dunsboro Defender* comes to his office shortly after sunrise, so as to fill the "hooks" with "copy" for the printers, and have the rest of the day for meeting his subscribers, for collecting subscriptions, and for gathering, on this auspicious day, public news and public views. For court day makes of Dunsboro a clearing house for news as much as a clearing house for official and private business.

Today the news most talked about is the killing of Philip Armstrong. Even those who do not discuss this tragic mishap carry in their minds the somber and sinister facts which they have heard about it. Everyone realized that this tragedy came directly out of the

question of prohibition; some holding prohibition itself responsible, others, violation of the prohibition law. And still, nowhere, on the street, about the hotel, in the homes,—wherever men and women gathered,—nowhere was there acrimonious dispute. For, although very many were angered at the wanton slaying, all were grieved, and common grief made all more gentle. But this common grief of the community did not of itself account for the comparative silence and careful forbearance exercised by townsfolk and visitors alike on this busy court day in Dunsboro. Fear was also in their hearts; fear that an already bad situation might grow worse. This fear was not so much of the Federal Government's officers, for all their ruthlessness and the unlimited power behind them; it was rather fear of the growing suspicion, hatred, and violence between citizen and citizen, between neighbor and neighbor, between friend and friend, kinsman and kinsman, yes, even between brother and brother, and, in a few known cases, between father and son. For everybody realized that things were not as they had been. The people of this county had long prided themselves upon the peace and order existent in their community, upon the friendliness and courtesy which outsiders and visitors recognized and praised, and the inestimable value of which the citizens only now began to appreciate fully, as strife and fear and disorder were driving them away.

And so, when between ten and eleven o'clock the high-powered car, filled with armed men, drove down the main street of the town, the people on the sidewalks, recognizing their county sheriff at the wheel, with five grim-looking strangers carrying ugly rifles,

became almost totally silent for a moment, and their resentment and anger grew ominous. Had they known that this raid also was directed against the Armstrong place, the outrageous indecency of the thing would have enraged many so as to bring them to the point of violence and bloodshed. How comes it that these officers of the law are so callously harrowing the feelings of the grief-stricken family and disrespecting the memory of the man they had murdered, even as his cold body lay for the last time at rest in his father's house?

Johnson had decided it was better not to wait. The discovery of "moonshine" upon the Armstrong place would make the case against the family complete. Confiscation of the estate might follow. At the very least, worry and great financial loss must follow, and Johnson had a strong hope of so reducing them in circumstances as to make of himself a welcome "friend in need." This same stroke would remove Danny Lacey and lodge him in jail, perhaps in the penitentiary,—and that quickly. For it so happened that Circuit Court convened on the morrow. A quick arrest would make it possible to hale Danny before the County Court today; and the County Judge, in the face of such evidence, could do nothing else than hold him over for trial before the Circuit Court. And there would still hang over him the perhaps more serious danger of trial before the Federal courts. So Johnson struck.

After Simkins had returned to town, having "planted" Danny's loft with the contraband liquor, he had found a place for sleep in one of the cars stored in the garage. He was here when daylight came and, with

daylight, Johnson. For Johnson's burly constitution recovered rapidly from any temporary disorder, and, moreover, his mind would not permit him to rest until he had seized the golden opportunity offered today of advancing his dearest hope and desire. And so, at the rising of the sun, he had come to the garage to find Simkins. Of Simkins he desired only one thing,—to remind the sheriff to leave town sharply at a quarter after ten o'clock. He would, of course, see the sheriff himself, but, to make assurance doubly sure on this auspicious occasion, he would have Simkins remind him. For, by a quarter after ten, Johnson would have met the train, on which Willie Pat's father was most likely to arrive, and would have taken him to his sorrow-stricken home. Thus he would be on the spot to avail himself of any further advantages that circumstances might create, and he would be there on a most plausible mission. And, indeed, before the "revenue men's" car moved down the street in Dunsboro, Johnson had reached the "pull" gate on the pike. Beside him sat "Pat" Armstrong, seeing nothing;—nothing, that is, save the image of his son, of Willie Pat, of their departed mother, of his son again. As they passed through the gateway, it is true, he raised his eyes and gazed sadly for a moment at the brick house, hidden in the grove almost as his oldest born was hidden within it. Johnson had no word of sympathy; Johnson had no thought of sympathy. Johnson had plans of his own, and just now his hypocritical expression of sympathy would avail him nothing. His mind was all upon his own interests, and at this very moment he had suddenly recognized an opportunity to

improve them. For, as his companion looked sadly up at his stricken home, Johnson had glanced across the creek, and, through the open door of Danny's cabin, saw that young man stretched out upon his bed crosswise, apparently asleep.

"He *looks* as if he is drunk; that will fit in well with the whiskey in the loft, and it will help out *for Willie Pat to know it*. I'll see to it that she does know," determined Johnson, with cold glee.

Fortune favors him at once. For, as he assists the invalid father from the car and up the steps of the porch, he espies Miss Boulder seated at the further end in the shade, and has the opportunity of glancing at her smilingly, and of receiving a similar understanding glance in return, before Willie Pat, who had noticed from upstairs the arrival of the car, had hurried down and thrown herself sobbingly into her father's arms, kissing him over and over as she led him into the house. Johnson's heart had risen to his throat at the sight of Willie Pat, her paleness accentuated by the black of her mourning gown, her great grey eyes large as though in keeping with the largeness of her sorrow. But the effect upon Johnson's resolution was only to make it harder and fiercer, and he almost uttered the thought that now burningly filled his mind: "I'll have you yet, and I'll have you before very long."

So he went at once to Miss Boulder with his most pleasant smile and with hand outstretched, to the evident pleasure of the pretty nurse. Then quickly Johnson's countenance changed. He appeared like one in doubt, like one who would speak but feared to do so, like one who might speak if he could do so properly.

"What is it?" inquired the nurse simply enough.

Johnson remained silent, as though pondering. Then he looked with an air of frankness and sympathy into Miss Bowlder's wondering blue eyes, and said:

"I'll tell you; I'll tell you, even if it offends you. I'll tell you because I like you and I like him, and he likes you and I think you like him. It's about Danny. Walk with me around to the side of the house. He is lying across his bed, and he looks as though he may have been drinking. He should be awakened and got away from there and kept hidden today, because it is almost certain that the Government men will be here again on search, and, if they find Lacey drunk, they'll take him. He may have had something to do with that still in the cave. If you think enough of him to go down and warn him, it ought to be done. I'd go myself but that he does not like me. Also I must see Miss Willie Pat at once and then return to town. Will you go and awaken him and get him out of there?"

Nothing could have pleased the nurse better. She wanted to see Danny just then more than she wanted anything else. To her, his being intoxicated seemed only a good lark. And she did want to save him from the danger which Johnson had pointed out. Also she welcomed this chance of doing something for him for which he might be grateful. So she arose at once and left for the cabin, saying:

"Of course, I'll go and warn him. Tra-la-la." And she skipped away with a wave of her hand.

"Good," encouraged Johnson. "And now," he reflected when she had gone, "if by great good luck she is in the cabin at just the right moment, this will be my

one big, lucky day." Instantly Johnson quitted the porch and strolled around by that side of the house where Aunt Millie's kitchen door opened out on the little side porch, his keen eye now upon the cabin and now upon what portion of the turnpike lay within his view. Near the porch he called for Aunt Millie. The faithful old servant appeared after some delay in the doorway, evidences of sorrow written upon her dusky countenance. Johnson addressed her at once.

"Aunt Millie," he said cordially, "I want to tell you how much I am obliged to you for all you did for me while I was here a care upon the family. I don't know how we could have got along without you. I want you to accept a little present from me as a mark of appreciation,"—and he held her out so generous a bill that her eyes flew open and a happy smile spread over her erstwhile melancholy countenance. Johnson seized upon this auspicious moment to make his request, for, when Aunt Millie attempted to express her thanks, Johnson interrupted her:

"That's all right, Aunt Millie. I want you to do me a favor. I want to see Miss Willie Pat right away;—tell her it is only for a moment, but right away. Tell her I'll wait for her on the side porch, not in front. Tell her not to delay, it is very important."

From this side porch could be had a good view of Danny's cabin. From his point of vantage, Johnson saw the nurse approach the cabin door. Here, for a moment, she paused, peering cautiously, playfully in. Then, lifting her foot to the threshold, she disappeared within the room. In her short experience as a nurse, the youthful Miss Bowlder had already found herself in

strange places and amid unusual surroundings, but, city bred, this was the first log cabin she had ever entered. To her, this was quite a romantic episode in her present unusual assignment. The interior walls of white-washed logs, the rude chinking of flat stones embedded in a plaster of clay, the primitive doors, front and back, made of rough-hewn planks, the little windows, the immense fireplace in its chimney of stone, the broad planks of the floor, worn so that the knotty parts stood out with a dull polish, the strange ladder leading up to the mysterious trap, the great bareness of the place, all absorbed Miss Bowlder's attention for several minutes almost to the exclusion of thought of the sleeping occupant, who had not even stirred since the young woman's entrance. Even when she became vividly conscious of Danny's sleeping presence, she was loath to awaken him, for she still wished to look about unobserved, and especially to solve the mystery of the ladder, the little trap, and the loft above. And so she was high up on this ladder, indeed half way through the trap when Danny, his nap over, turned with a great sigh of content, and opened his eyes, as it happened, upon a pair of neatly shod feet above, and the fringe or flare of a woman's skirt.

"Well, I'll be d—d," ejaculated Danny, his eyes now wide open indeed and he sitting bolt upright. At his exclamation, the feet and ankles drew up higher and disappeared. More astonished than ever, Danny uttered another crisp expression of his honest belief that what he had seen contained more of the element of surprise than awaits those whose destined end is Tartarus. For several moments reigned silence. Danny broke it by calling out:

"Hello!"

Receiving no answer, he called again:

"Hello, up there!"

There was no answer still. Then cried Danny:

"After all, you know, this is my house; and, if you don't answer or come down and show yourself, I'll have to come up and find out who you are."

There was a slight sound above, which might have been a giggle or might have been a suppressed sob; Danny could not be sure.

"Are you coming down?" he demanded.

No answer.

"Then, I'll come up." And forthwith he ascended the ladder. As his head rose above the floor, he was greeted with a cry of: "Boo!" and he found himself looking into the big blue eyes of the nurse, who had seated herself on the floor at the very edge of the trap and had watched every step of his ascent.

Danny was puzzled and surprised, and he was annoyed beyond measure. He was not a prude. Neither did he see in Miss Bowlder's prank anything reprehensible. But he was beginning to be annoyed by her company. He was in no mood to flirt with her, he did not wish to mislead or compromise her. Every unnecessary moment he gave her, he felt was given in disloyalty to himself and to his tenderness for Miss Willie Pat. For, by this time, Danny would rather have his heart walked upon by Miss Willie Pat than coddled by Miss Bowlder. For all this, Danny would not wantonly hurt Miss Bowlder, however silly he thought her, and so he laughed good-naturedly with her, and said:

"You almost tumbled me from the ladder with fear

when you cried, 'boo!' and now let me assist you down from this dangerous perch."

"No, NO!" cried Miss Bowlder in a hasty, husky, altered voice, and with baby eyes astare. "There they are again! Get up here, quick, or they'll see you!"

She seized Danny by the shoulders and almost dragged him into the loft with her. There were sounds below, first a footstep, then a sharp command:

"Come down from that loft!"

Miss Bowlder put her hand over Danny's mouth, but he removed it, and roared angrily:

"Who the devil are you to give me orders in my own house?" And he hastened down the ladder, only to find himself confronted by one of the deputies who had only yesterday raided the still in the cave. The fellow had him covered with his gun, and looked at him steadily with his cold, blue eye.

"Just sit down there a minute," directed the deputy.

Danny had recognized the fellow, and realized at once that this was another raid. For his personal safety from any molestation, he felt quite unconcerned.

"Couldn't you wait until after the funeral to visit this family again?" he asked in a cool, scornful tone.

"We're not visiting the family; we're visiting you. We want that whiskey you've got hid upstairs."

"I have no whiskey upstairs," replied Danny coldly. Only then he thought of Miss Bowlder and the embarrassment of the situation flashed upon him with sudden vividness. He flushed painfully, uncontrollably; and, at the moment, through front door and back, entered the sheriff and four other armed men. Danny recognized them.

"He says they ain't no whiskey in the loft," the first deputy informed the newcomers. "Two of you can go up and see, while the rest of us stay here."

"Wait a minute!" cried Danny. "Take my word for it; there isn't any whiskey there. You can search the place any time you wish, only don't do it now. Take me along with you, and come back in five minutes to search it if you wish. In five minutes, but not now! I ask you as a gentleman."

"What good could five minutes do?" demanded the leader. "You could not get away with it in five minutes; and, if you could, we shouldn't want you to."

"Let's get ahead," urged another; "shall I go up?"

"Yes, go on up; you and Dick."

A little startled scream from the loft greeted this demand. Below, there was an instant's silence followed by guffaws and jibes and knowing looks at the expense of Danny, who stood against a wall, with defiant bearing and flashing eye, but with cheeks that burned and with indignation rising in his heart.

What followed may be easily imagined, especially as we should now turn our attention to Johnson and Willie Pat; for Willie Pat has just come down to the side porch, where she is talking with Johnson, who stands on the ground below her, hat in hand and with eyes directed toward the cabin. Willie Pat had come out upon the porch at the moment the armed men entered the gate, and she had seen them first surround the cabin and then go in. At the sight of them she gasped with a feeling of terror akin to horror, and had clasped a porch post for support. Whatever Johnson had had in mind to say to her,—if indeed he had any—

thing to say,—was never spoken, for Willie Pat, her pale features writhing with anguish and with a note of dread in her voice, suddenly gone weak, cried:

“Oh, Mr. Johnson, what are they here for now? Those are the same men! Why do they come here again?”

“They think there’s moonshine here. That fellow, Lacey, must know more than anyone thinks.”

“How could he? No one makes whiskey here? No one has been here to make it! Aunt Millie and I have been alone till only last week. Oh, look! They are coming out. I must call papa!”

“No, not yet! They may be leaving. Let us watch them!”

Now the men were coming out from the cabin door. They were talking and laughing. Of the first three to step into the open, every one carried a jug. Then appeared two more, holding Danny between them, and leading him toward the car, which stood waiting on the turnpike. At the sight, Willie Pat could not smother a little gasp, and would have turned away. But Johnson detained her again.

“Watch!” he said.

When Willie Pat looked again, her astounded eyes beheld the reluctant and weeping Miss Bowlder led away by the last of the “revenueurs.” As they neared the gate, Miss Bowlder screamed out and resisted, until the officer, putting his arm around her, in a manner forced her forward.

Johnson, seeing this, told Miss Willie Pat hurriedly that he would see her again soon, and then hastened down the hill, calling to the official raiders to wait for

him. Willie Pat sank down to a sitting posture on the floor of the porch, and would not look again. After Aunt Millie, who had come out of the kitchen at Johnson's loud cry, had assisted her young mistress into the house, Johnson hurried back up the slope, entered his car, and drove down to the pike. There he picked up Miss Bowlder and the one officer left to guard her, and drove with them to Dunsboro. Whether Johnson's action in saving Miss Bowlder from a public ride in the raider's car was prompted by some remaining spark of native gallantry, or whether he intuitively felt that her good will might yet be of service to him, one cannot tell. Neither does it matter.

CHAPTER XVI

AT COUNTY COURT

WILLIE PAT sat in the darkened back parlor, too worn for further tears, her arms stretched out upon a table, her head resting upon one of them. In this attitude of utter dejection she was discovered by her father from the hall door. He quietly stepped into the room, and laid his hand tenderly upon her bowed head. She started, for she had not been conscious of his approach. Then, recognizing her father, she arose with a little cry and, throwing her arms about his neck, rested her head upon his broad chest. For several moments they stood thus in silence. Then, because of her tears and her quiet sobbing, he asked her:

"What is it, daughter?"

"Oh, papa, everything, everything. Everything is so terrible and is growing worse and worse."

"Nothing worse can happen to us now, daughter. We need not now be afraid of the future."

"But, *papa*," pleaded Willie Pat tearfully, "won't it be worse if we have to lose our old home? These men who just now raided the cabin will not have any mercy. And they are getting evidence against us right now."

"Why, daughter, they cannot have evidence that can prove us lawbreakers, because we have not been lawbreakers."

"That will not protect us, papa. Look at poor Philip! Was he a moonshiner? And now he's dead. And

they have found whiskey in the cabin. I saw them carrying out jugs. And, then, those two low, deceitful persons! We can trust them to do anything mean and underhand. Oh, they are so cruel!"

"Of whom are you speaking, daughter?"

"Of that yellow-haired, silly nurse, papa, and of, of—of the farm hand I wrote you of. How *could* I have been so deceived. And Philip, too!"

"But, daughter, what have they done?"

"Why, papa, can't you see they must have known all about the still, and must have brought all this misery upon us? And all the while pretending friendship! Why, papa, only Saturday I went with him to Aunt Mahala's, and now he has been found in the cabin with that woman!"

Her father spoke not in reply to this. He appreciated keenly her wounded pride, but he suspected also the presence of another pain. He extended his hand and, when he had clasped hers, drew her to him till she sat upon his lap as when she was a little girl.

"Tell me, daughter," he said after a moment and in a voice filled with gentleness, "had you been thinking well of this young man?"

"Yes, everybody thought well of him, and I thought—but now I *hate* him!"

She arose, flushing painfully, and hurried from the room. At the door she turned and said earnestly, though still with some bitterness:

"Papa, I never want to hear of him again! I hope his name will never be spoken to me nor in my presence!"

And Willie Pat hurried to her own room. The father's eyes followed her till she passed from his sight.

He remained seated, lost in thought. The grim set of his mouth and the brows contracting over smouldering eyes proved that at moments his thoughts were not pleasant. His son was dead, his daughter was flouted, his property was menaced, all by one man, a hireling and apparently an adventurer and a hypocrite. Would he accept this outrage upon himself and his family like some senseless beast, or would he avenge it as a man? He went to a drawer and drew out an ugly-looking revolver, black and long of barrel. The sight and the touch of the thing for the moment sobered him. Trouble would follow trouble if he should shoot the miscreant, trouble of a kind he had never expected to experience. *But*, what man would he allow to cause treacherously the death of his son, to slight his adored daughter and, in security, go on with further plotting against him and his rights and his family? By God, no man could do that and live! The unspoken oath seemed to ring and echo in his ears. But, reaching his ears also, distinctly, although like some whisper from afar, came another utterance which made him relax his rigid posture and look at the weapon in his hand in a kind of amaze. Vengeance is *Mine*. He put the pistol away. Then he went into the large parlor and gazed for a moment upon the fixed features of his dead son, his head bowed down, his lips moving in prayer. A few minutes later he might be seen pacing, bareheaded, in spite of the noonday sun of June, back and forth upon the shadow-checkered lawn, his hands behind him and his head bent low.

Meanwhile Danny had been sitting, abstracted in thought, on the bed in his cell in the county jail. The

kind-hearted but astonished jailer had left him in peace, realizing that thus could his real sympathy with his interesting prisoner be best known. For a while Danny's lively sense of humor buoyed him up. He relished the story which his two arrests within a week would make for his friends, especially for his old college chums. He knew also that he was entirely innocent either of moonshining or of trafficking in the illicit liquor, and his experience of last week gave him confident assurance that from this difficulty also he would be speedily released. But these annoying things were the lesser of Danny's griefs. What bowed his heart down was the death of his friend,—the brutal, wanton, hurried and untimely destruction of that noble life in promise. To have lost also the friendship of Philip's family, the friendship already so prized but now so hopelessly ended, rendered him, in his present state of dejection, sick at heart. But, if the truth be told, the heaviest blow he bore had come from the tender hand he loved the best. Willie Pat's sudden frigidity was at first as much a puzzle to him as it was a pain; but reflection upon the happenings of the last twenty-four hours explained away the mystery while only rendering the pain more bitter. What *could* Willie Pat think of him now, under the circumstances of his arrest? In his anguish, he almost hated the nurse, for he was ignorant of her real reason for being in the cabin, and attributed it,—who could blame him?—to her innate frivolity.

"The fool!" he muttered. And then he sat suddenly erect, his eyes filling with a growing appreciation and wonder; for he realized in a flash that appearances

would now not only convict him of at least complicity with the moonshiners but would indirectly connect him guiltily with Philip's death. Why, he was right on the ground, as though he were a decoy, when the "revenue" men came and shot Philip! and Miss Bowlder was with him; Miss Bowlder, caught later in his cabin and arrested with him when the whiskey was captured! What *must* Willie Pat think of him! What would the jury think of him? His eyes seemed to stare with horror at these suddenly revealed and terrible realities as he gazed through the iron bars of his door, unseeing. Gradually, however, there emerged from the picture of terror he had conjured up, the flashing teeth and rolling eyes of a happy black face which was Peter's.

"Good mawnin', Guvnuh," said Peter. "How you feelin' dis mawnin'?"

Danny looked hard and long at the happy ebony face before he could find a word. Then recognition came to him.

"Is that you, Peter?" he asked, with sudden relief and pleasantness.

"Yassuh, I heered you was in jail, an' I come to see you. I thought maybe you might want me to do some-
thin' fo' you."

"I'm glad to see you, Peter. It looks as if we always meet in jail, doesn't it? How did you get out of jail yourself?"

"Dey dismissed me. Dey knowed I hadn't done nuthin'."

"How did you know so soon that I was here?"

"Dat dere white man dat looks like a catfish tole me."

"Who? Simkins?"

"Yassuh, dat's his name. Kin I do anything fo' you, Guv'nuh?"

"Yes, you can, Peter," Danny assured him. "If you want to do me a favor, go out to the Armstrong place and help with the corn and tobacco. Aunt Millie will be glad to see you, and Mr. Armstrong will make you a good boss, I am sure."

"Dere's another nigger wif me. Mus' I tek him too?"

"Yes, take him along: they'll need you both."

"All right, Guv'nuh, we'll go out yonder today. I'm comin' back to see you agin. De jailer done tole me I could come whenever I want to. Good-by, suh."

It was wonderful the change so quickly wrought in Danny's frame of mind by the short but friendly visit of the humble Peter. He now sat musing smilingly upon Peter and upon recollections of the night of the threatened mob when he had with hardihood claimed the title which Peter still willingly acknowledged. This pleasant mood might not have lasted long under the best of circumstances, and now it was interrupted by the sound of approaching footsteps in the corridor. Would they come all the way to his door? Danny looked and waited. Yes, and his visitor was his friend, the Colonel.

"Good morning, Governor," greeted the genial Colonel. "Is this your favorite hotel when in town?"

"It seems to be, doesn't it?" laughed Danny. "I wish that it afforded better opportunity for me to entertain you. I can't even ask you in; the door is locked."

"I don't wish to come in, sir, thank you; I have come to invite you out. I have just been to the court-

house, and your bond will be arranged in a few minutes. Then you will come home to dinner with me."

"Really, Colonel, you are all too kind. I don't know when I shall be able to repay you, if indeed ever."

"Don't mention it, sir; get yourself ready and I'll be back for you."

As to the Colonel, it occurred to him that it might be a kindly thing to make a little visit to Miss Bowlder. He found her, on inquiry from the jailer, comfortably established in a private room belonging to the jailer's family.

"Isn't it terrible?" she cried as soon as she opened her door to the Colonel's knock. "Isn't it awful to be in jail?"

"You are not in jail," returned the Colonel smilingly. "This is as nice a room as I have at home. Besides you have not been proven guilty of anything wrong. So why worry?"

"I am not guilty," cried Miss Bowlder. "I haven't done anything in the world. What have they arrested me for? It is dreadful! I'll be ashamed to show my face anywhere after this."

"No, you won't," the Colonel consoled her; "you'll be proud, as you should be, to show so pretty a face anywhere in the world. Besides, no one makes any great ado nowadays of arrests under the prohibition laws."

Miss Bowlder repaid the Colonel with her archest and most brilliant smile. Then she ran on:

"You see, Colonel Mitre, it all came about this way. Mr. Johnson was out there, and he is *such* a good friend of the family. He is doing everything in the world for them, and he sent me down to that little house to

warn Mr. Lacey. You see, Mr. Lacey was asleep,—Mr. Johnson said he was intoxicated,—and Mr. Johnson was afraid that Government men would come to-day. And he thought Mr. Lacey must have whiskey somewhere or else he could not get drunk. I'll tell you confidentially, Mr. Johnson thinks Mr. Lacey is the one that was making moonshine in the cave. So he sent me down to warn Mr. Lacey so that he could hide the whiskey. You see, Mr. Johnson did not want more trouble made for the family."

"Why didn't he warn him himself?"

"He sent me down to do that. Oh, it was because he wanted to talk to Miss Willie Pat. That's what he said. Oh, yes, and he said Mr. Lacey did not like him. It was funny at first. I climbed up into the loft and scared Mr. Lacey. But then those men came and, oh, what will people think of me?"

Now, the Colonel, who was a good judge of human nature and a very discerning and kindly man, realized with every passing moment the value of the information Miss Bowlder had just given him. For one thing, there had been no such thing as a clandestine or improper meeting between Danny and this young woman, of that he felt certain. For another thing, the hand of Bill Johnson was at work somewhere beneath the surface of the troubled waters on which the Armstrongs now rode. For a third thing, this pretty young woman, this flighty, frivolous young woman, was an innocent victim of very cruel circumstances or design. Evidently she did not herself realize fully the injustice of the lot fate was dealing her. The Colonel's sympathy went out to her.

"Have you any friend here to take up your case for you?" he inquired kindly.

"Mr. Johnson is going to get me out of jail, if that is what you mean. He says they'll let me out today. He says I had better go directly from here to the train and get back to the city right away. He thinks nobody will then know anything about this terrible affair."

"Yes, that may be better," admitted the Colonel reflectively. Then he asked:

"Do you know for certain Mr. Johnson will secure your release? And how will he do it?"

"Oh, he said something about going on a bond!"

"I see," nodded the Colonel. "Then that will be all right. I am very glad that your troubles are nearly over. Yes, I think with Mr. Johnson it would be better for you to go directly home. Good-by."

Half an hour later, the Colonel and Danny were making their way through the court-day crowds that filled the public walks in all that portion of the town given over to business. Danny was again endeavoring to voice his appreciation of the Colonel's loyal confidence and generosity, but the Colonel hushed him.

"Tut, tut, young man, tut, tut. I had to get you out of jail so as to be able to talk to you, and I have to talk to you for several reasons. Here we are; walk in. Now make yourself at home while I see if dinner is ready. If it is, we shall not delay."

"Now," resumed the Colonel after they had lunched and were seated on the broad, shaded porch. "I think we had better get one or two things settled promptly. I learn that you are charged with manufacturing liquor,

with trafficking in liquor, and with having liquor in unlawful quantity in your possession. How about the truth of these charges?"

"I never manufactured a drop of liquor in my life, I never sold a drop in my life, and, if I had any in my possession at the time of my arrest, I for one did not know anything about it."

"You did not know anything of the whiskey they found in the loft?"

"No, sir, not a thing."

"Were you ever in the loft?"

"No, sir, I don't think I was ever in the loft. I went up the ladder once or twice, and from the ladder I looked in, but I don't think I was ever in the loft till just a minute before I was arrested."

"How did you happen to be up there then?"

Hereupon Danny told him minutely the circumstances that led to his being in the loft with Miss Bowlder.

"Isn't it a damnable situation?" he added.

"I'm afraid it will sound fishy in court," admitted the Colonel reflectively. "Every word of it is true, but as evidence it will be damaging."

"You say you did not know the whiskey was there. Have you any idea as to who owned it or who put it there?"

"Not the slightest."

"Could it possibly have been Philip's?"

"I am sure it was not."

"Do you think that fellow, Simkins, hid it there? He's always half drunk, and, if I am not mistaken badly, he is a confirmed bootlegger."

"I don't know, I am sure, Colonel. I have seen him half drunk several times, but I don't see why he should

hide whiskey in my loft, and I don't see how he could have done it without my knowledge of it. Of course, I do leave the door open nearly all the time."

"Well, all that will be brought out, I suppose. What I want to ask you especially is whether you would rather stand trial immediately in the county court. You can have your trial this afternoon if you wish. The prosecution is ready if you are, and the docket is light."

"Yes, I should like to have the thing over. I am as well prepared now as at any time."

Danny said this very confidently. He knew he was innocent, and believed the circumstantial evidence not strong enough to convict him. No evidence seemed possible for proving him a moonshiner: none seemed possible for proving him a bootlegger; and, as for having the liquor in his possession, it was under his roof, it is true, but it was hidden in a loft he had never visited,—but hold he *had* visited the loft, he had been found there with Miss Bowlder! Still,—and here was relief,—she could testify as to why he was in the loft! Yes, she could do this, and would thereby bring on him the sneers of the prosecution and the coarse ridicule of the court room.

At this painful point in his reflections, Danny was interrupted by his elderly friend, who suggested:

"If you are ready, we might better go early to the court. The docket is light, I am informed, and the judge has said he can call our case at about two o'clock."

Unpleasant as was the prospect, it at least promised action, and Danny preferred action of any sort to further communion with his own thoughts. He, there-

fore, assented at once and, within ten minutes, he and the Colonel were passing through the sparsely occupied court room, moving toward the bar. All of the idlers present turned their look upon Danny, and some of them nudged one another and whispered things about the "Governor," or about having heard the nurse was a "mighty putty gal," or about having been "caught mighty quick" in his moonshining, or they asked who in the h— the fellow was, and one or two offered to bet on the outcome of the trial. The case was called, the charges preferred, and Danny, without aid of counsel, pleaded "not guilty." The prosecuting attorney presented his witnesses. They were the "revenue men" and the sheriff. Their evidence was unanimous, undeniable and convincing. There were broad smiles and titters at certain statements relating to Danny and Miss Bowlder. In his defense, Danny admitted every fact alleged. He could only deny, without proving his denial, all ownership or knowledge of the whiskey found in his loft. The judge suggested that Miss Bowlder, with whom the prosecution felt they could dispense as a witness, their case being so strong, might be summoned to testify in Danny's behalf if he so desired. This, Danny hastily declined. There was laughter in the court room, and the judge announced his decision, which was that Danny be held over for trial before the Circuit Court under bond. This the Colonel arranged, and the first skirmish with the law was over.

CHAPTER XVII

MISS BOWLDER DEPARTS

BILL JOHNSON, for reasons of his own, had absented himself from Danny's trial. The outcome, however, he was quick to learn, and his satisfaction was deep if well concealed. In the chain of circumstantial evidence which he was so rapidly weaving about this hated stranger, there was only one weak link,—Miss Boulder. And lo, Miss Boulder had been eliminated by Danny himself. He had not let her testify in court. At this reflection, Johnson gleefully chuckled. The question now was, would Danny's shame, or his high principle,—call it what we will,—prevent him from asking for her testimony when in his desperate trial before the Circuit Court. That trial might be held the very next day. The prosecution, urged on by the fierce enthusiasm of the majority, would be glad to secure a verdict so quick and effective as to satisfy and delight the extremists; and so far as the State was concerned there would be no difficulty about giving Danny's case an early place on the docket. It even appeared that Danny himself might wish a speedy trial. Certainly he could have had his hearing before the County Court postponed if he had not wished to have the case heard at once. Whether the finding of the County Court had sobered him and made him realize now the need of caution, Johnson could not tell. In any event it would be safer for him to have Miss

Bowlder out of the way. She would be glad to go; he had arranged her bond; and now all for him to do was to run out to the Armstrongs for her traveling bags in time for the late train. With Johnson, to resolve was to act; and so it was that, as Willie Pat sat forlorn in her room, gazing abstractedly through the window at the wan sunshine of the listless afternoon, her eyes swollen from recent tears, her countenance pale and drawn with grief, her very frame seeming sunken and bent under a weight of sorrow, she was aroused from her painful meditations by the quiet entrance of Aunt Millie, who told her Mr. Johnson was down stairs and requested to see her. With a sigh she arose and, descending the stairway, found her visitor awaiting her expectantly in the back parlor.

"Miss Willie Pat," he addressed her, arising and extending his hand respectfully, "pardon me for interrupting you again in your grief; but I think we should get Miss Bowlder away from here without delay. She has no further business hereabouts, and after her escapade of this morning her continued presence might prove embarrassing."

"I thought she was in jail," spoke Willie Pat coldly.

"She is in jail still. She will not be tried until next County Court. So I have arranged her bond, and she is free to go back to the city until that time. I think it better she should not be here any longer."

"Oh, I do, too; much better."

"I thought you would, and that is why I interested myself in her bond. I have come out now to get her traveling bags. I thought you might prefer not to see her."

"I am glad she did not come. I never wish to see

her again, nor to hear of her. And I thank you for your thoughtfulness."

"It is nothing. I wish I could really do something for you. Anything. Is Colonel Mitre here?"

"No, he has not been out today. I am disappointed."

"He will be here soon, no doubt. He has been busy with that fellow, Lacey. Got him out of jail, had him to dinner, accompanied him to court, and has now gone on his bond to appear in Circuit Court. You had heard he was held over, had you?"

"No, I had heard nothing," replied Willie Pat frigidly. Her forbidding tone delighted Johnson; and, yet, why should her pulses quicken, and why after a little hesitation, did she add:

"What was the outcome of the trial?"

"Why, he is held under bond to the Circuit Court. All the evidence was against him. He was his own lawyer. He would not have Miss Bowlder testify. She might have helped him out. She certainly would if she could. Did you know that they were caught together this morning up in the loft?"

"Oh," gasped Willie Pat; and Johnson looked quickly at her with shrewd, appraising eyes; for that gasped monosyllable might have been an acknowledgment, a question, or a moan, so strange the tone in which it was uttered. Willie Pat was suffering;—of that he had evidence written upon eye and lip and cheek. As Johnson continued to look at her, he saw her whole countenance gradually changing, changing, till, with a swift rush, there at length blazed at him from flushed cheek and flashing eye such furious indignation and withering contempt as he had never before seen on woman's countenance.

"Mr. Johnson," she spoke low and tensely, "you are not a gentleman. You should not have told me what you have told me. You don't understand the respect due a woman. You are a coward, Mr. Johnson. You are injuring cruelly that poor nurse, who is defenseless against you. And I believe you are telling lies. I don't believe such terrible things about Mr. Lacey. I don't believe them."

She passed rapidly to the door. Turning before passing out, she flung again at him in tones of withering scorn the words: "I don't believe them!"

Johnson was so utterly astounded that he sank into a seat and for several moments stared stupidly after her at the vacant doorway. Afterward he arose and would still have gone to the door to seek for Willie Pat but that very shame and humiliation kept him within. While he was still hesitating, hiding in the back parlor, trying to decide on something to do to mend his broken plans or at least repair his shattered self-esteem, Aunt Millie brought him the nurse's bags and told him Miss Willie Pat would not see him any more. A few minutes later, therefore, Johnson could have been seen driving his big car down the avenue, but few could understand, fortunately, even if nearby to witness, the mad deadly rage that blackened his countenance and seethed like a volcano within his powerful frame.

As for Willie Pat, she had hastened to her room where she now paced the floor almost in distraction, wringing her hands in her suffering, at times clenching her fists at the recollection of Johnson's words, and crying bitterly: "I hate him, oh, how I hate him!"

"I don't care," she went on, "however bad Danny is, he is not so heartless, so cruel as that Johnson, so

coarse, so brutal. Every appearance is against Danny, and now they will all turn on him while he is down, and he will not have a friend. My heart cannot believe that he is all bad. Alas, my heart cannot believe what my eyes see,—what my eyes have seen.”

She threw herself upon her bed and wept bitter tears. Then confusion came over her at the thought of her own selfishness in dwelling upon her private sorrow, forgetting her broken-hearted father, forgetting her dear, lost brother, whose silent remains lay solemnly in the darkened parlor below. She arose then with greater show of strength, and, having bathed her swollen eyes, descended the stairway and looked into the parlor where her brother lay. There alone sat Katherine Mitre. Willie Pat would not disturb her, and retired across the hall. Here was her father's room, and here she found him sitting in his arm chair. She nestled close to him, putting her arm about his neck and caressing his grey hair with her hand.

“Where is Katherine?” he asked her quietly after some moments.

“She is with Philip,” replied Willie Pat softly.

“Poor child,” breathed her father. Then he added: “What on earth has become of the Colonel? I don't understand why he has not been here.”

Now, those friends who might see the Colonel at this very moment would likewise probably wonder why he did not go out to his old friend in his hour of affliction instead of sitting comfortably on his porch talking and smoking most amicably with that very young man who, to all appearances,—and to the general belief,—had been the cause of the Armstrongs' present grief and oncoming misfortune. For all saw calamity approaching.

The State Prohibition Law contained a confiscation clause directed against those upon whose lands illicit stills were operated, whether by themselves or by others. The extremists among the prohibitionists, fortified by the presence of the "Government men" and with the indisputable evidence they held, were determined to force the hands of the local authorities. These, elected on a prohibition ticket, could offer no protest and in fact would probably meet with the approval of the majority of the citizens of the county, for a strong, quick prosecution, for this majority was certainly opposed to the liquor traffic. Danny had asked an early trial, which had been set for the morrow. The case of the State against William Patrick Armstrong, the Colonel had been reliably informed, would be presented early also, possibly on Wednesday, the day following Danny's trial.

"I asked some of the fellows about the courthouse if they did not think it heartless and in wretched taste to bring confiscation proceedings on the first day after the burial of his son," the Colonel was now telling Danny, "and most of them think so. But they said they could make no objection and that there were strong forces urging the trial on."

"Well, do you think, Colonel, that the State can win this suit?"

"Under the circumstances, I believe the State can, sir."

"In that case, Mr. Armstrong would be ruined, would he not, Colonel?"

"Practically so. Owing to poor health and Philip's absence, he has not operated the place very successfully of late and has not much surplus, I fear. The place

itself is a valuable property, however. It contains more than four hundred acres, mostly good land, with some of it very fine, with good buildings and plenty of woodland and water. Its convenience to town adds also to its value."

"You make me want to buy the place, Colonel."

"It is a beautiful property."

"I wonder if Mr. Armstrong would sell."

"No one would buy the place now on account of this confiscation threat."

"That is just why I should want to buy it," declared Danny.

The Colonel turned his head and looked at Danny straight and hard.

"Do you mean, sir, that you would buy Mr. Armstrong's place in order to take the risks upon yourself and so make him safe?"

"In effect, that is what I mean, Colonel, although I do not know Mr. Armstrong at all, and my concern is not primarily for him."

"Mr. Lacey, are you considering this as a serious possibility?"

"Yes, sir, most serious. I want you to help me in it."

"I am afraid I cannot do it, sir."

"Why not, Colonel?"

"It would not be fair to you, my son, and of course Pat Armstrong would not consent to it."

"I want it done, Colonel; I want it done before Mr. Armstrong knows of his danger; I want it done before my own trial,—while I have time. So far as I am concerned, I can so use the money and even if I lose it, shall still have some left;—not much, perhaps, but some. I want you to put the deal over, and I don't

want my name to appear in it at all. You can put it over as my trustee, and you are the only one who can."

For a long, long time, the Colonel sat and thought, looking far out toward the blue hills that stood like faithful outposts about the little town,—looking beyond these blue hills and into space, occasionally frowning severely, anon softly smiling, and now,—yes,—with moisture glistening in his eye. There once was a girl who had given up a brilliant match and great wealth for love of him in his comparative poverty. His daughter Katherine was that girl's daughter. And now this young man would likewise offer money on the altar of love. How could he advise against it? He would not advise against it. He turned his gaze toward Danny, and then arose and walked toward him, his hand warmly outstretched.

"I'll help you, sir," he said with dignity and with no sign of emotion but the long, steady and firm clasp of his hand, and the steady, caressing glow in his eye.

"That is fine, Colonel. I'll wire my bank without a moment's delay. You can prepare the deed and have it ready for Mr. Armstrong's signature. If you can prevail upon him to sell, the transfer may be completed to-night."

Thus urged by Danny, the Colonel gave his consent and, putting on his hat and picking up his cane, walked at once to the courthouse to make out the deed from the record in the Clerk's office, while Danny, on his errand, soon found himself nearing the railroad station, in which was the office of the telegraph company. It was nearing train time, and quite a number of people occupied the platform and the waiting rooms; but

Danny, not heeding the crowd, pushed his way into the telegraph office and was already writing out his message when he was interrupted by a gushing, feminine cry:

"Why, Mr. Lacey!"

Blond, blue-eyed, doll-faced Miss Bowlder, powdered, painted and perfumed, but smiling, nevertheless, with genuine pleasure at seeing him, moved toward Danny swiftly with outstretched hand.

"I'm so glad to see you before I go! Wasn't it terrible for them to arrest us? And wasn't it awful for me to be in your cabin when those terrible men came! I'll never come back to Dunsboro again!"

Now, Danny's mind spoke for him, and there was no mistaking even the words it framed. It said: "Yes, what in hell made you come into my cabin?" But Danny's manner was ever courteous with women, and what he said aloud and with a pleasant smile, was:

"Oh, you surely will!"

"No; I'll never come back here. I should be nothing but a laughing stock. And it was all Mr. Johnson's mistake. He thought you were drunk when he saw you lying on your bed asleep this morning, and he was afraid the officers would come and catch you, and he asked me to hurry to your cabin and wake you up and warn you. He meant well, though, didn't he? Oh, I am forgetting to write my telegrams! My! I can't do a thing with these kid gloves! You write it for me, Mr. Lacey."

Danny took down her dictation, which merely informed a friend at the City Hospital that she would be back that evening, and bade her good-by as she hurried out to be ready for the incoming train. Like one in a

dream, he saw the train come and go and the crowds disperse, and soon, excepting for an occasional appearance of the station master, he found himself quite alone. Thus left to himself, the real loneliness of his situation was borne in upon him. He was truly a stranger in a strange land. His only real friend was lying dead. The one woman who had ever awakened his love, a girl with low, sweet voice and soft grey eyes, had only scorn for him. If the Colonel stood by him with friendly disposition, there was Johnson who hated him mortally. There remained only Simkins and the jailer, one a vulgar and uncertain vagabond, the other good-hearted and kindly,—not more so toward him than toward any other stranger. What was he doing here in this strangers' country? Why should he not take the next train for the city and thence return to his own friends and people? If the Colonel had not gone on his bond, he would be tempted to quit the place and let the courts find him if they cared to. But what of his telegram to his bank? Why, even that was only in preparation for another Quixotic 'stunt,' preparation for throwing his own money away for an old fellow whom he had never met, who probably would insult him as his daughter had insulted him.

"But, no," reflected Danny more honestly, "I am not doing this for the father. I am doing it for the daughter. I don't want her to lose her home. I may be a spiritless pup, to lick her hand that slaps me. Nevertheless, I am going to see this through. If there were time, I might wait; but there is no time. If the place is to be saved, it must be saved now. If I lose my money and get no thanks for my pains, I'll at least have

the supreme satisfaction of having tried to do the very best I know under the circumstances. I'll see whether she *knows* or not. Oh, it is always *Willie Pat, Willie Pat*. Well, what of it?"

This question gave Danny pause. What, after all, had Willie Pat done to him? She had, after a most pleasant outing on Saturday, treated him with unmistakable, icy coldness on Sunday morning when she had met him unavoidably, and thereafter had pointedly shunned him. Why? He did not know. He could only suspect. *Suspect!* Why should he not *find out* like a man? That is what he would do at the first opportunity. Of course he could not see her for some time yet. The thing to do now was to find the Colonel and learn whether he had the deed ready. With this purpose in mind, he walked down the street and turned in at the Colonel's gate. He did not wait long, for Colonel Mitre soon appeared and showed him the results of his work in the completed deed.

"And now," added the Colonel, "perhaps I had better go out to Pat's at once. Are you thinking of going?"

"Yes, I'll go with you. I must see Philip once more."

As they drove out in the Colonel's old surrey, Danny said:

"Colonel, you have never even questioned me about the whiskey found in the cabin, nor asked the truth about my connection with the still in the cave, and I have been thinking of so many things that I have not offered to tell you. The truth is, I don't know a thing about either."

"I know you don't, Mr. Lacey. You are the victim of circumstances, or of some rascal's designing. Would you mind telling me the truth about yourself and Miss

Bowlder? Especially how did you and she happen to be in your loft this morning? Pardon me, sir, if I become too personal. I assure you I do not ask out of idle curiosity."

"I don't know yet what brought Miss Bowlder to the cabin. I take it, and so took it from the first, to be one of her thoughtless pranks. At any rate, she came while I was asleep, and, when I awoke, she was in the loft, or disappearing into it. I called to her, not even knowing who it was, to come down. She did not obey, and I climbed up the ladder to see who it was. The officers came while I was partly through the trap, and Miss Bowlder, unquestionably alarmed, urged me, and indeed half dragged me into the loft. That is how it happened."

"And she had no knowledge of the whiskey hidden there?"

"Of that, I cannot speak with certainty. I do not *believe* she knew anything about it. She told me an hour ago in the telegraph office that Bill Johnson had sent her to warn me against the raid."

At this, the Colonel, appeared very thoughtful, but remained silent. Soon, the old horse turned in from force of habit at the Armstrong gate. Danny got out, saying that he had some things to do in the cabin and that he would be up at the house very shortly. The wise old Colonel, however, suggested:

"Suppose you wait here for me. I'll want to see you before you go to the house. Won't that suit you as well?"

"Surely, Colonel, I'll wait here for you. Don't be in a hurry on my account."

And the Colonel was not in a hurry. The sun had set and twilight had stolen away behind the hills, the stars were out bright and the chorus of night-sounds from creek and wood and meadow had become monotonous to Danny before he heard the Colonel's footstep approaching his door from the little crossing at the creek.

"Well, Colonel?" Danny greeted him as he stepped up into the room.

"Well, sir, I am sorry indeed to have kept you waiting so long. It is better, however, that you did not go up to the house. Mr. Armstrong is very angry with you. He begs me to keep you out of his sight."

"That will not cause me any suffering," retorted Danny.

"No, I am sure it will not, sir; and likewise, sir, I am glad it will not. And I believe that you are a young man of such sense and sentiment as to make allowance for Mr. Armstrong's feelings under the present circumstances. You must remember, whoever has done the wrong, it is Mr. Armstrong that is suffering the wrong."

"You are entirely right, Colonel," assented Danny, "and I beg your pardon for speaking so of your friend. I'll keep away from him until this nasty tangle is straightened out. When the truth is known, he will acknowledge he has no reason to be my enemy. But what does he say about selling the place?"

"I believe he would be glad to sell, now that his son is dead and his health broken; but only later on, not now. No power in this world could make him sign *that* deed tonight. Danny, my friend called me a *damned*

scoundrel! He says I would have him sell the roof from over the head of his dead son."

Tears stood in the Colonel's eyes and coursed freely down his cheeks as he told it.

"But we must make allowance, sir. And you must get off this place at once. Take my key and spend the night at my house. I must go back to Pat. Good night, and God bless you, son. I'll see you in the morning."

CHAPTER XVIII

BLOOD AND BRAWN

SIMKINS sat leaning against a tree, whittling. He was near the edge of the woods where, a few days before, he had saved Philip and Danny from Johnson's gun. From his post, he could watch the road, although screened from view himself. There was nothing extraordinary in Simkins' whittling at eight o'clock in the morning, nor in his being alone in the woods at this hour of the day. Simkins might be found anywhere at any hour of the day or night without surprise to those who knew him. Nevertheless, this bright June morning, there was something extraordinary. For one thing, there was his hat. He was crowned, not with his broad-leafed, battered, weather-beaten felt; nor with his sagging, frayed, familiar "jimmie," but with a new straw "sailor" of last year's pattern, encircled with a band of beautiful pink. For Simkins to have a new hat, and especially a hat of such pattern and style, was extraordinary; and, set above his sun-tanned visage, above his straggling locks and unkempt beard and fin-like mustaches, it gave a quite extraordinary appearance to the whole man.

Now, this extraordinary headgear was only a sign of an extraordinary purpose. For Simkins had made up his mind to go to church. If Simkins had ever before attended a religious service, he did not recall it. There were at least half a dozen churches in Dunsboro; but

none of them, if we judge solely by any overt act of theirs, was consumed with the desire of having Simkins sitting regularly in the front pew. No Baptist, nor Methodist, nor Presbyterian, nor "Campbellite," nor Episcopalian, nor Catholic had ever given him an irresistible invitation to join.

True, Simkins did not receive many invitations of any kind from "nice" people; and, of course, the church people were the "nicest" people in Dunsboro. Father Roche, of the Catholic Church, spoke to him in public, even calling him "Tom," and twitting him about his fishing and other activities. Then, everybody, even "niggers," went to the Catholic Church; and at funerals and weddings members of every denomination in town might be found represented, in no matter which of the churches the ceremony took place. This morning this would be found true in the Catholic Church. But Simkins had made up his mind to go to church this morning, whether welcome or not. Why?—For one thing, he had begun greatly to admire and to like Philip Armstrong. For another, he had become the worshipful slave of Miss Willie Pat. Then, who more than he was intimately, vitally, interested in the cave still, and in the tragedy which began at the still and would end at the funeral? There was something awakening in Simkins' conscience, something stirring in his heart. There was pity, and awe, and remorse, and fear. During the night he had roamed about the lawn, uneasy, strangely moved by the soft weeping that now and then reached his ears from within. With the first glimmer of dawn he had shrunk away. He avoided being seen. And so he came to this spot in the woods to

await the passing of the funeral, intending to follow afoot and to steal into the church afterward unnoticed.

Even now, the low, muffled rumbling of hoof and wheel reached his ears. In a kind of awe, he peers out to catch, at the turn of the road, the first glint of the sunbeams on burnished harness and polished carriage-front. As the procession approaches, he withdraws further from view. Now, it is beneath him on the road. He sees the pale, stern face of the father, the pitifully bowed form of the sister, the sorrowful countenances of friends as carriage after carriage passes. Now the last is above him on the road; and now his incongruous figure is following afoot, behind. Now he is seated well in the rear of the church, partly hidden by the massive base of a pillar. No other countenance in the church wears the intently absorbed look now upon the catfish face of Simkins. The black altar dressing and vestments, the saffron wax candles, the vested acolytes hold him spell-bound, while the sad requiem, floating as it were upon the solemn tones of the organs, moved him as he was never moved before. And now Simkins for the first time recognizes Father Roche, for the pastor has come to the altar rail to speak. Simkins strains forward to hear.

“What doth it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?” questioned the priest.

From that opening question to the end of the sermon, Simkins misses not one word. He is strangely, deeply stirred. Even after the mournful assembly has followed the bier down the aisle and out to the waiting carriages, Simkins remains. Then the loneliness of the deserted edifice begins to weigh upon him, and, as

soon as the funeral cortege is in movement down the street, looks about him hesitatingly, and then shambles watchfully around towards the parish house. Father Roche from his window sees him approaching and quickly makes his appearance on the front porch.

"Good morning, Tom," greets the pastor; "come up and have a seat. Have you been in church?"

"Yes, sir, I been in there."

"It is a very sad affair, Tom; very sad."

Simkins was silent, only keeping turning awkwardly in his hands his new hat.

"The poor Armstrongs are certainly eating their bread of sorrow," went on the priest. "Do you think it was right for those officers to shoot Philip?"

"I know it wasn't right; that's what I came to tell you. Mr. Phil wasn't running no still in that cave. He didn't know nothin' about no still bein' there. I'm pos'tive of that because I know who owned the still and who run it."

Father Roche remained silent for a few moments, giving Simkins encouragement to speak on, but, as Simkins likewise remained hushed, the priest said:

"What you tell will make valuable evidence, and may save the Armstrongs' property from confiscation. You know there is talk of that. You will be willing to testify, will you not, Tom?"

"I don't know whether I will or not, Father Roche. You see, I'm just tellin' *you*. I'd git myself in a heap of trouble if I told the court all I know. Bill Johnson owned that still, and I run it for him."

"Bill Johnson," ejaculated the priest.

"Yes, sir," replied Simkins firmly; "Bill Johnson's the man."

"Why do you tell *me* this, Tom? Why tell me in confidence?"

"I don't know jest ezzactly why I'm tellin' you. I took the notion in church. I wanted to tell somebody. I'm sorry as hell for Mr. Phil. And that damned Johnson,—excuse me for cussin',—I wish I could git loose from him. I was listenin' to what you said when you was preachin' about saving your soul, too. I ain't doin' no good the way I'm goin'. I ain't *never* been no good."

"Don't say that, Tom; you have done good in your life, and you will do more and more good from now on. You have great opportunity right now. Make the truth known about the moonshining on the Armstrong place."

"That's what I ought to do," admitted Simkins; "but, you see, they'd put me behind the bars, and I don't want nothin' like that."

"No, Tom, you are not to blame for not wishing to be sent to prison. But I'll tell you this, Tom, *and I know*: you had better go to prison with a clear conscience than live the rest of your life with a guilty one. Think it over seriously, Tom. And pray. Ask God to give you the light to know what is your duty and the courage to do it as you know it."

"Me pray!" exclaimed Simkins. "I don't even know no prayers. Besides that, I'm so crooked I might even lie when tellin' the Lord I want to be good. I'll tell *you*, Father Roche. *You* do the prayin'; you're a preacher. And I'll see about it. But I don't want to go to the pen. That's too much fer me."

"Think it over, Tom; it is better to do the right thing. Besides, the Court may be very lenient with you if you turn state's evidence; and I assure you

you will make some influential and good friends by telling the truth. Think it over. And *pray*."

Simkins turned away without replying, but there was a furrow on his brow, and he was mumbling something to himself.

Now, Danny Lacey had not attended Philip Armstrong's funeral. This was not because of pique nor of resentment toward Miss Willie Pat nor because of affront from Willie Pat's father. These unhappy circumstances made him yearn only the more to pay the last loyal tribute of devotion to his friend. Danny did not go to the church nor to the cemetery because his appearance would have created distraction,—even excitement,—at either place. For Danny, it must be told, looked fitter for a war hospital than for a position in funeral obsequies. His head was swathed in bandages, his eye was swollen and discolored, one hand was in a sling and, as he walked, he limped painfully. How Danny came into such plight may be briefly told.

When Bill Johnson drove in anger from the Armstrongs into town, he was in a sorry state of humiliation. Willie Pat's repudiation of him and her defense of Danny aroused in him all the demons of jealousy. Diabolical profanities and revolting obscenities followed one another in endless mutterings that, for hours gave him the aspect and demeanor of a madman. Nine o'clock found him sitting alone, in stark silence and watchful brooding near the hotel. The dense foliage of a group of trees threw about him a gloom into which no rays from the nearby arc light could penetrate. Nine o'clock found Danny Lacey walking into town, following the Colonel's invitation to spend the night in his

home. When Danny came to the hotel, he stepped indoors for a drink of water. As he raised the glass to his lips, he heard, through the open window, a passing footstep and a man's voice,—which he thought he had heard before,—inquiring:

"Bill, are you going to the funeral tomorrow?"

Instantly Danny was all attention.

"No," he heard in curt reply, and he recognized the voice of Johnson. He lowered his glass in astonishment.

"Why," spoke the first voice, "I thought you would be there for sure. Don't you love Willie Pat any more?" This teasingly. "Talk's been you're goin' to marry her."

Danny's heart sank like lead. It was as if someone had dealt him an unexpected blow. He heard Johnson laugh sneeringly as he replied:

"Oh, sure I love her all right. Who wouldn't? But I'm not going to marry her. Who would? Except that d—d fool stranger she's been vamping for about a week? I'll love her just the same. Who wouldn't? I'll love her, you see. But *he* can marry her."

"I don't quite see what you mean," began the other; but he ceased speaking at the unexpected appearance of Danny, who came out of the doorway, teeth set, jaws clenched, eyes burning, hands trembling, countenance deathly pale. He watched Danny advance toward Johnson until he stood beside his chair.

"You low-lived whelp. You contemptible, cowardly liar," he heard him say to Johnson in low, deliberate tones, although the voice trembled with passion. And then he heard the smack of Danny's hand on Johnson's cheek. Johnson's cry, as he sprang up, was unlike

anything but that of a maniac or of a furious or desperately injured beast. With a forward lunge of his burly form, he drove his first blow right into Danny's throat. Danny went down in a red world, pain and fire in his throat, suffocation in his lungs and blindness in his eyes. He felt Johnson leap upon him,—felt it almost with detachment and unconcern, for he was in an agony of suffocation. No breath would come, and he knew that thus he could not last long. With both hands Johnson now seized him by the hair of the head and pounded his skull against the ground. The first blow sent a flash of red across his brain, but, by the fourth or fifth, the motion forced a gasp of air into his lungs. With returning breath, his brain cleared. He strove, but failed, to reach Johnson's throat with his hands. But, sitting as Johnson was upon his chest, Danny's legs and feet were unhampered, and, doubling these up quickly with a swinging motion, he caught his ankles under Johnson's chin, and threw him backward until he himself was free. Dizzily he arose, leaning with one hand against a tree as he watched Johnson getting upon his feet and advancing for a second attack.

Although regaining strength with every breath, Danny was pitifully weak before Johnson's onrush. He placed his back against the tree, with the hope of fending off with his arms Johnson's worst blows, and so saving himself for a time from being knocked down and rendered helpless again. Johnson was soon upon him with a furious rush and a blow from the shoulder straight for Danny's face. Almost too weak to raise his arms, Danny threw his head to one side, only to have Johnson's big fist tear his ear so that blood

flowed freely down his neck. But a groan of pain from Johnson, and the sight of his powerful opponent staggering away from him told him as plainly as words that Johnson had smashed his hand against the tree trunk. Danny waited, now breathing freely, but Johnson was slow to return to the attack.

"You unspeakable brute! You lying coward! You'll eat your words before we are through," muttered Danny as he stepped forward from the tree, now clear of mind and steadier of foot. With cautious coolness, he met Johnson's sobered attack; and, sparing himself by headwork and footwork, he gradually wore his burly opponent down.

"Get down on your knees and apologize," demanded Danny.

For answer, Johnson swore, and rushed at him, this time to meet Danny's fist with his mouth and to receive another jarring blow beneath the ear.

"Get down on your knees and apologize," repeated Danny.

"I'll kill you, you—"

Johnson did not finish the sentence, Danny's fist smashed his bleeding lips again and his snarling teeth, loosed and broken, in his mouth. Without giving him time to recover, the lighter contestant struck hard upon the chin. Johnson trembled all over, and sank slowly to his knees.

"Now apologize."

"I'll kill you," repeated Johnson.

Danny waited until Johnson had struggled slowly back to his feet.

"Raise your hands and defend yourself," commanded Danny.

But Johnson neither answered nor obeyed. Surprised, Danny leaned forward to look at him more closely, and he did so just in the nick of time; for Johnson, in the half shadow, was drawing his pistol from his hip pocket. Like a flash, Danny's fist shot forward,—again,—and again. Johnson's knees sagged, his pistol dropped from his nerveless hand, and he clutched a tree for support. Danny picked up the gun and tossed it away.

"Will you apologize now?" he demanded.

Several seconds passed. Then Johnson muttered:

"I apologize."

"On your knees."

"You've beaten me; isn't that enough?"

"For me it is enough. But you get on your knees for *another*. Get down!"

Johnson knelt. "I apologize," he said.

Danny turned his back and walked off, feeling suddenly tired out. As he rounded the corner, he was quietly joined by the single observer of the struggle.

"Will you let me shake your hand?" this person asked.

Danny recognized his friend, the jailer, and extended his hand with a weary smile. And this is how Danny became unpresentable for the funeral.

When, however, the funeral was over, Danny made his way without delay out to the cemetery, and sat down for an hour beside the newly-made, flower-covered grave. When he arose to go, with spirit quiet and subdued, he looked long at the silent mound and murmured:

"Good-by, Phil. May God be good to you. Ask Him also to be good to me."

Then, with bowed head and pensive mind, he left the cemetery. It was almost noon when he walked into Dunsboro and proceeded without delay to the home of Colonel Mitre. Both the Colonel and his daughter were at home. They had thought it best to leave the Armstrongs to each other in the sacred hour of grief and affection following the funeral, although they intended going out to the bereaved home later in the evening. Katherine, for all her grief, gave Danny such a smile of welcome that he was reminded of his battered appearance, and thought she was smiling in amusement at him in spite of herself. In this, Danny was mistaken. His rakish appearance did win Katherine's smile, but it was an admiring, warm and friendly smile; for Katherine knew already how Danny had come by his warriorlike condition, the friendly jailer having confided the entire story of the fight to the Colonel not an hour before. Katherine made no comment, however, as her father hurried Danny eagerly into the library.

"Do you know," he asked Danny, "that your trial is set for two o'clock?"

"No; is it? Well, that suits me."

"But don't you think," very seriously, "we had better have it deferred?"

"No, Colonel; I'd rather have it over."

"But we could establish our proofs better if we took more time! Father Roche phoned just a few minutes ago, and recommended postponement of the trial, at least for a few days. I don't know whether he has any information, but apparently he thinks he has good grounds for urging us to wait."

"I certainly appreciate Father Roche's interest in me," acknowledged Danny cordially, "but by all means let us get it over. I'll be ready in court at two o'clock. Will you be there with me, Colonel?"

Danny asked this rather wistfully.

"I'll be there with you, son," the Colonel assured him kindly. And so, nothing whatever interfering, Danny's trial was begun at the hour set—two o'clock that same afternoon.

CHAPTER XIX

LIGHT BEFORE DAWN

THE dripping trees and the forlorn call of one wet robin were the only sounds audible about the old house. The rain was over, and a chill was in the air. It was late afternoon, and Willie Pat had not left her room since returning from the funeral. To occupy her mind, she had busied herself with sorting and arranging the contents of desk-drawer and wardrobe, till now all was done and she stood gazing listlessly from a window. From her post she could see Simkins coming through the wet grass toward the kitchen. As he passed, he looked up, and espying her, took off his hat and smiled. It was not a pretty smile, but it was Simkins' best. His figure was bedraggled, his face haggard. Willie Pat hoped Aunt Millie would give him something to eat. But at that moment Aunt Millie came into the room behind her, carrying in one arm a bundle of kindling wood and in the other hand a bucket filled with coal.

"Honey chile," she announced, "it's gittin' chilly, an' I allowed you better have a fire."

"You are too good to me, Aunt Millie," Willie Pat assured the old servant with a grateful smile. "But first, Aunt Millie, won't you please go down to the kitchen and give poor Simkins something to eat? He looks so haggard and so forlorn."

"Huh! He looks like a *catfish*. I declar' fo' de Lord,

Miss Willie, dar never was nuthin' as funny as dat man wif his new pink-ribbon hat. But I'll go wait on him as you say."

Aunt Millie waddled out. When she returned, a quarter of an hour later, she found Willie Pat seated before a cheerful blaze, which she had herself kindled.

"No, ma'am," the old woman continued as though never interrupted. "Dar ain't nuthin' funnier 'n dat man. He's *cryin'* now."

"Crying? What can he be crying for?"

"He's *cryin'* cause what I tole him."

"And what did you tell him?"

"I tole him I wouldn't give him nuthin' to eat. But dat ain't what made him cry. I tole him I wouldn't give him nuthin' to eat *puss'nly*, but dat you done give me orders an' so I had to. A little after dat, he began *cryin'* while he ate his supper, and afterwards he got up and walked out. An' you ought to seen dat man! He was holding his head up jes' like real folks. Dar he goes now!"

Willie Pat turned her head, and sure enough, there walked Simkins toward the gate, firmer of tread and more erect of carriage than ever seen before. He passed through the gateway and, turning toward town, was soon lost to view.

"The poor fellow has some good in him, no doubt. It all only shows that we should be patient and charitable in our judgment of everyone."

"Dat's what I say, honey; and especially about Mr. Danny. He ain't carin' nuthin' 'bout that nurse. He ain't carin' nuthin' 'tall 'bout her."

"Why, what in the world do you mean, Aunt Millie? Who in the world is thinking about Mr. Lacey?"

"Dat's jes' what *I* say! Who thinkin' o' him? Ain't *nobody* thinkin' o' him. Dey got him in trouble in co't, an' dey gwine send him to the penitentiary, an' he ain't got no friends, an' his friends done gone back on him. *All of 'em!*"

"He has brought his trouble upon himself has he not?"

"No'm, he ain't! He ain't done nuthin' to git in trouble. He's a *good* man. You can't fool yo' Aunt Millie. Mr. Danny, he's *quality!*"

"Aunt Millie," pleaded Willie Pat in a voice that was low and trembling between sorrow and indignation, "I wish I could believe you are right. But you know, Aunt Millie, what I saw with my own eyes!"

She arose and passed swiftly across the room, her indignation mounting, her pale cheeks turning red and her tired eyes flashing sternly, as she commanded:

"This is enough. I know you mean well. But never,—never, I say,—speak to me again of those two creatures. I wish never to hear their names mentioned in my presence."

With this, Willie Pat left the room and descended the stairs, and then went in to be with her father.

"Daughter," he welcomed her in tones of affection as she drew near to kiss him, "that young man you had employed here has been sentenced to prison for two years. Colonel Mitre telephoned shortly before you came down. The case was very one-sided, the Colonel said. I asked him if there seems any danger of confiscation proceedings against *us*. He replied only that he

is coming out this evening. Apparently he thinks there is danger. It looks as though this is our common hour of trouble, doesn't it?" he added tenderly stroking her hair.

"It is our common trouble, daddy, not only our common hour. I have no trouble that is particularly my own."

"But this young man, this Danny Lacey—"

"Forget him, papa, that is what I want to do."

For several moments neither father nor daughter spoke. Pat Armstrong, while admiring his child's spirit and courage, was not deceived as to her suffering. His anger, in spite of weakness and sorrow, slowly arose within him, and he questioned sternly:

"Has that fellow slighted you, child, or—"

"Oh, papa, do not speak of him, please, nor of her! I don't wish to think of them! Promise me you won't! We shall have many other things to think about now, and to do; and that will be better."

"Well, as you wish, daughter. Is that the telephone? Answer it."

Willie Pat did as requested, only once more to be reminded against her will of Danny Lacey.

"Oh, Willie Pat," confided Katherine Mitre, for she it was at the other end, "do you know you have narrowly escaped a big scandal? Yes, indeed! Danny Lacey thrashed Bill Johnson last night on your account—"

"He had no right to do anything on my account—"

"And he made him apologize on his knees for something he said about you—"

' He should mind his own business—"

"And they say that Bill Johnson is so ashamed and humiliated that he has left town. Mr. Lacey is all battered up, too, after the fight. He is bandaged and crippled, and, oh, he looked so pitiful in court when his sentence was read. I could not help crying. They are taking him away on the late train. Papa feels dreadful. We are coming out after a while. Look for us. Good-by."

"Who was that?" inquired Pat Armstrong as Willie Pat passed his door.

"Oh, why it was Katherine. She and her father are coming out, she says," and Willie Pat hurried upstairs to her room.

"And now what?" Willie Pat questioned herself as she stood, scarcely breathing with fretfulness and distress in the middle of the floor. Would she never be permitted to put Danny Lacey from her mind? Would she never be allowed to forget him? *He had fought Johnson for her and had made him apologize on his knees! But for what?*—Strange, she did not at the moment care. And he was himself injured for her sake! And Katherine Mitre had cried at the sight of him! Why should *Katherine* cry? And now he was going to prison! Would Miss Bowlder go to see him there? *Miss Bowlder!* Oh, why should she have brought her offensive presence to her once happy home? Were it not for that woman, how different, how different—But, no! She bit her lip in vexation at her own weakness. Let the two of them go; they were not worthy of her thought. And now a flush of shame spread from neck to cheek at the thought that she might be involved with him in a public scandal. The nurse's paramour her

champion! Katherine had said she had narrowly missed a scandal. *Had* she missed it? It would be on everyone's tongue. She felt as though she must suffocate indoors, and hurried downstairs again and far out upon the lawn where, in spite of the wetness of the grass, she paced back and forth, trying to regain her composure. Thanks to her innate good sense, her deeply religious nature and her early training in prayer and piety at Sharon, this she was able ere long to accomplish, and when, an hour later, she returned to the house to meet the Mitres, her mind was at peace and her heart quieted by the newly-won resignation of her soul.

On account of the coolness and dampness of the night, they sat indoors,—Pat Armstrong and the Colonel and their daughters. The gentlemen, in armchairs, faced each other from opposite sides of the hall; the girls sat together on a lower step of the stairway.

"Possibly," the Colonel was saying, "we can secure sufficient evidence to prevail upon the prosecuting attorney not to open proceedings; although he seems to be afraid of the fanatics, who threaten to defeat him next election. It seems to me that, under the circumstances, you had better sell."

"I might escape ruin in that way," conceded Willie Pat's father; "and now, with Philip gone and my own health broken, it may be better to give the place up. But to sell under the present conditions would not be honest."

"Yes, it would be honest," contradicted the Colonel. "The purchaser I have already understands the situation perfectly,—just as well as you and I. He is so

anxious to buy the place that he has prepared for immediate cash payment, and has a deed ready for your signature. Here it is in my pocket."

The girls listened absorbed.

"Who is it that wants the place so badly?" demanded Mr. Armstrong.

"Danny Lacey," the Colonel replied simply.

A gasp and an exclamation of surprise came from the staircase; from Pat Armstrong the exclamation in contemptuous tones:

"That fellow!"

"Yes, it is his proposal, and he urges quick action."

"I'll never see my home placed in his hands. Be careful not to insult me, Colonel, by asking me again to do this."

"Very well, Pat," he agreed, "you and I are old friends, and I'll never insult you knowingly, I assure you. But this young man, Lacey, also is my friend, and I don't mind telling you that it would be no disgrace for you to sell your place to him, nor for any man to deal with him in any honorable way, financial or social or—"

How much further the Colonel would have gone in Danny's defense and vindication, we may not know, for loud footsteps sounded suddenly upon the porch and attracted the attention of all; and these were followed by the cheery voice of Father Roche, directing:

"Come on, Tom, we'll walk right in;" and a moment later in stepped the genial pastor, followed closely by Simkins.

"Well, well," greeted the priest; "how pleasant it is to find you all here. My friend, Tom, here is not satis-

fied with the way certain things have gone of late here and also in town and thinks he can rectify them better than anyone else. Tell them all what you have to say, Tom."

Simkins shifted uneasily from one foot to the other, turned round and round his pink-banded hat and twisted his shoulders several times before he spoke. Then, looking from one to another, but oftenest at Willie Pat, he announced:

"Mr. Philip didn't know nothin' 'bout moonshinin' on this place, and neither did Mr. Danny. Bill Johnson owned that still, and I run it for him. Same way, Mr. Danny didn't know nothin' about that whiskey in the loft. I put it there while he was out. Bill Johnson made me do it. Bill Johnson told the officers to raid the cabin; and Bill Johnson made me call 'em up to come and raid the cave. That was when he was sick upstairs."

"Bill Johnson," repeated Willie Pat in a weak voice, turning very pale. She took Katherine's hand, and rising, led her into the back parlor.

"I'm not surprised," declared the Colonel with some heat. "No man with common sense ever believed that either Philip or Danny had anything to do with that business. The only question was, who *did* run the still?"

"No," declared Father Roche, "there is another question, and that is, why did Johnson set up his still on Pat's place. Tom can tell you he set up his still here with the very purpose of having it raided so as to implicate this family? Am I right, Tom?"

"Yes, sir; that's what Johnson told me when we was a-doin' it."

"Of course, you all see the importance of this information," Father Roche continued, "since it removes all danger of confiscation, and will also release young Lacey from prison. Steps should be taken immediately to release him."

"Colonel," spoke Pat Armstrong, "after what Father Roche and Simkins have told us, I feel quite differently about your friend, and you may count upon my cooperation to see that justice is done him. I begin to see now his generous motive in offering to buy my place, and, although I could not accept kindness of such a nature from him, I certainly honor him for his motive. What do you propose as the best assistance we can give him?"

While the gentlemen were consulting earnestly as to the best and quickest way to have Danny released from prison, the two girls, who, up to this point, had been eager listeners in the back parlor, had a visit from Aunt Millie, who came in from the dining room.

"I want to see you, Miss Willie Pat, if Miss Katherine will excuse me. Jes' step here to the dinin' room with me."

With that announcement, made in the most solemn and self-possessed of tones, the old cook turned her back and walked out. Willie Pat smiled an excuse at Katherine and followed her.

"I know what you heard from de gentlemen an' dat dar Simkins, 'cause I was listenin' jes' as well as you all. An' I know somethin' none of 'em knows, and dat's what I want to tell my little gal."

"Aunt Millie, I'm surprised at you. You know you should not listen around so."

"Yes, I should too. Ef I didn't listen 'round, as you say, I wouldn't have nuthin' to tell you now. An' I sho' is got sum'p'n to tell, and dis time I want you to listen till I'm th'ough."

"My goodness, Aunt Millie, why so solemn about it all? For goodness sake, go on and tell."

"It's all 'bout Mr. Danny an'—"

"*Aunt Millie!* Didn't I tell you not to speak to me of him?"

"Yes'm, you did. But I'se gwine speak to you dis time nevermo-de-less; an' if you don' listen to me, den I'se gwine to leave you. Now, is you gwine to listen or not?"

"I'll listen," submitted Willie Pat.

"Well, den, honey, you thought Mr. Danny was a-triflin' wif dat nurse. He wasn't no sech thing. She runned after him. How come I know was 'cause I see her. No use tellin' you how often I see her, 'case I see her a plenty. But one thing my little girl jes' boun' to know, an' dat is, how come de nurse in de cabin when dem officers arrest Mr. Danny. She was down dar 'cause Mr. Bill Johnson *sent* her down, dat's why. He *tole* her run down dar fer to wake Mr. Danny up an' git him out de way! 'cause, he says, Mr. Danny was drunk. How he know dem revenueers was comin'? Tell me dat. An' Mr. Danny wasn't no mo' drunk dan I is. An' den Mr. Bill Johnson he sent fo' you. An' he didn't talk to you in de house nor on de front po'ch,—oh, no! He bring you 'roun' to de side po'ch. What he ask you 'roun' to de side po'ch fo'? He ain't

never done dat befo', is he? No *ma'am*, he ain't. But dis time he wanted you to see sum'p'n. He wanted you to see dat nurse comin' out de cabin. Dat's why."

"Aunt Millie, you are not dreaming all this, are you?"

"Dreamin'! Does I look like I'se dreamin'?" and the old woman put a ten-dollar bill in Willie Pat's hand.

"What has this to do with it, Aunt Millie?"

"Dat's what he gave me to call you quick, after he send de nurse to de cabin. Dat's when he tole me ax you to come to de side po'ch and nowhere else. When I think of it now, I want to burn dat money up. I'll burn it up yit if you won't believe me."

"I believe you, Aunt Millie. I believe every word you say," and she affectionately patted the old woman's cheek, while her grey eyes glowed with a new and tender light. "And now tell Katherine to come up to my room,—tell her to come after about five minutes; and you come with her."

Willie Pat walked out of the room like one in a dream, Aunt Millie watching her every slow step and, only when she was gone, ejaculating, "dar, now." She found herself, she knew not how, on her knees beside her bed, her eyes raining tears, her heart a tumult of joy and self-abasement. Why, *why* had she told Katherine to come in five minutes? But her footsteps and those of Aunt Millie were on the stairs, and her passion of prayer and happiness and revery must end. But they ended in one absorbing resolve which gave elasticity to her step and great dignity to her carriage and a sweet firmness to her lips and a new light to her eye. That is why, as she descended the hall stairs, followed

by Katherine and the faithful Aunt Millie, and, as the gentlemen in the hall arose and Father Roche announced: Willie Pat, your father and the rest of us are going to the Capital tomorrow, she replied with a smile of perfect content and self-possession:

"I am going to the Capital *tonight*. Who all are going with me?"

THE END

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